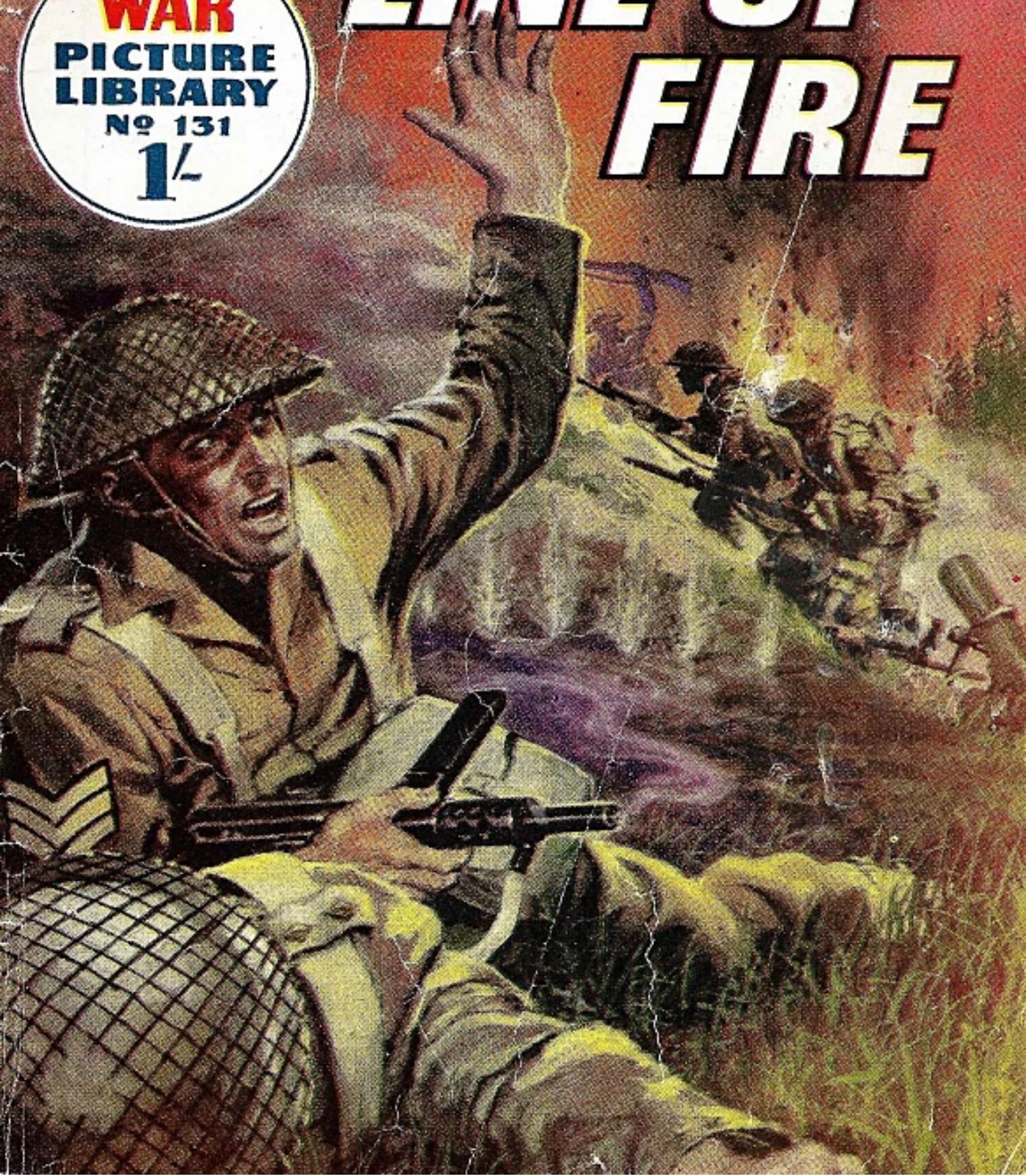


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# LINE OF FIRE



# 4

## ALL-ACTION ISSUES EVERY MONTH

★ No. 41 **THE DEVIL TO PAY**

*They were renegades—roaming the hills of Italy like a pack of hungry wolves*

★ No. 42 **LUST FOR POWER**

*When treachery commands a high enough price, no man is safe from betrayal*

★ No. 43 **ALL OR NOTHING**

*They hid their fears beneath the snarl of battle*

★ No. 44 **JUNGLE GREEN**

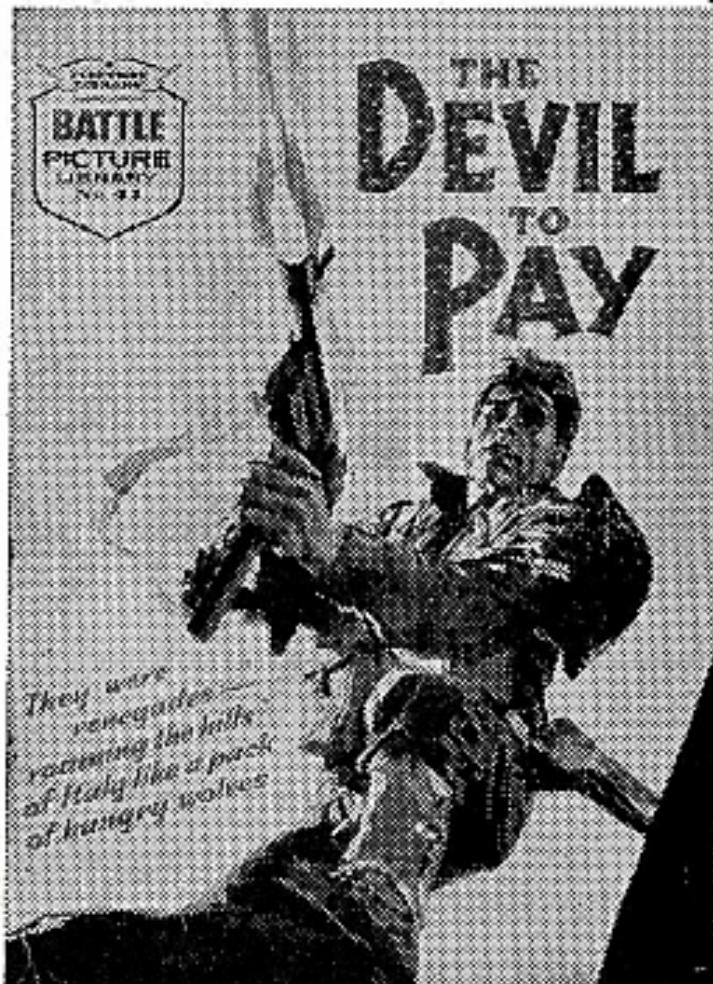
*There is a time to run—and a time to fight*

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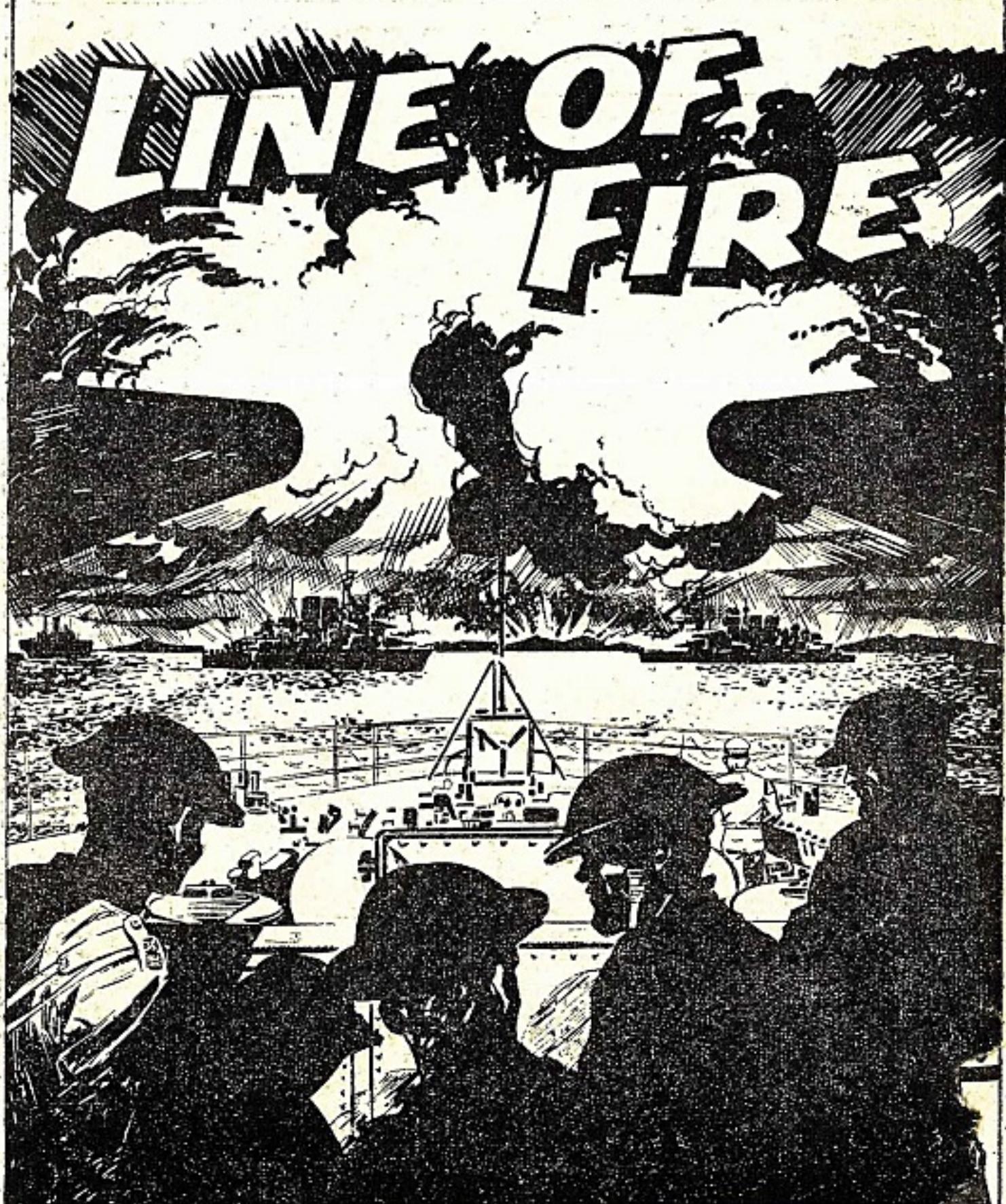
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# LINE OF FIRE

Fleetway Publications Ltd., 1961

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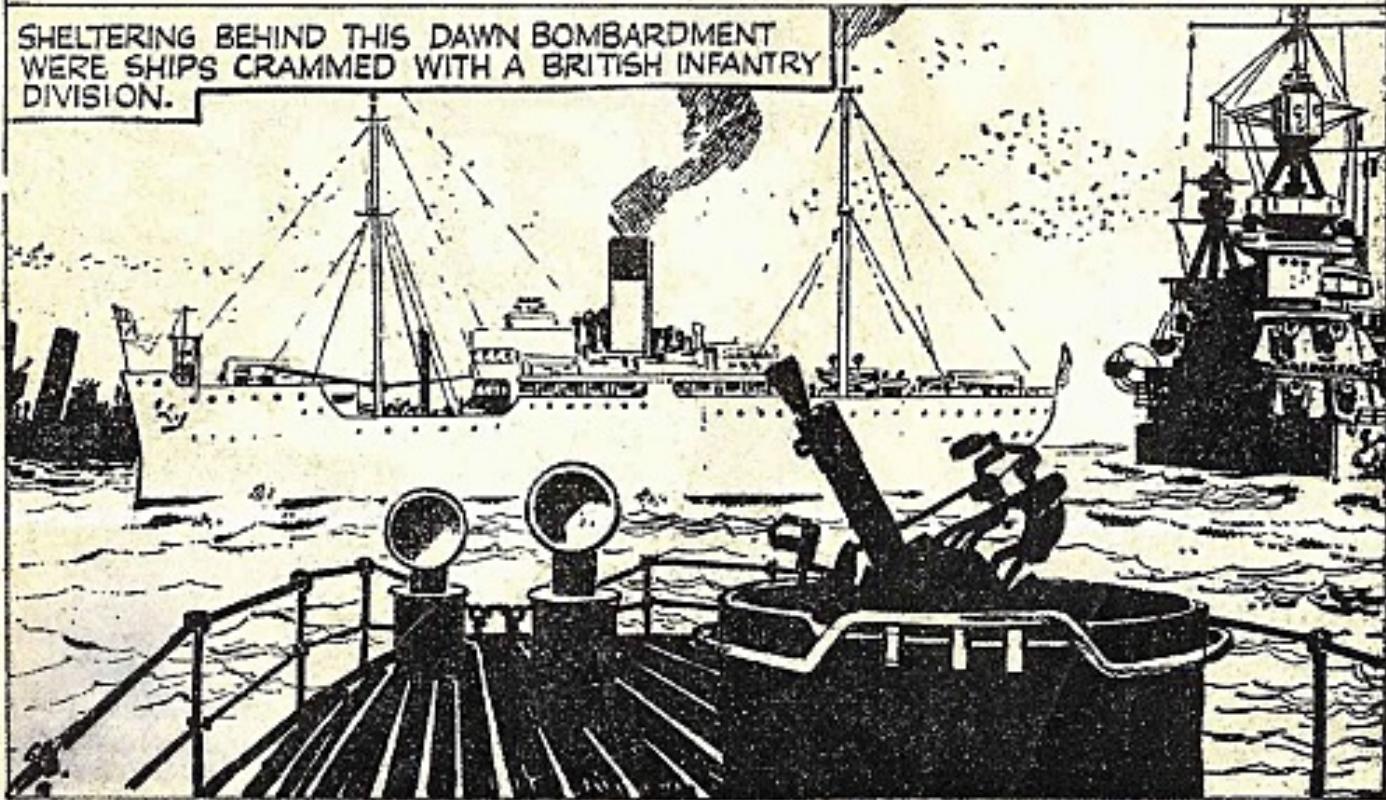


DAWN, SEPTEMBER 3RD, 1943. THE SUDDEN THUNDERCLAP OF BRITISH N  
GUNS SHATTERED THE CALM OF THE MESSINA STRAITS. THE VIOLENT PRELUDE  
THE COMBINED ALLIED ASSAULT ON THE TOE OF SOUTHERN ITALY HAD BEGUN.

WHY.

# Chapter 1. *OPERATION 'TOE'*

SHELTERING BEHIND THIS DAWN BOMBARDMENT WERE SHIPS CRAMMED WITH A BRITISH INFANTRY DIVISION.



ABOARD ONE OF THE TROOPSHIPS, A COMPANY WAS BEING ADDRESSED BY ITS COMMANDER. THE MEN LISTENED ATTENTIVELY, NERVOUSLY. NOT SO SERGEANT WILLIAM CRAGG, A PLATOON LEADER OF RARE COURAGE AND A HARD-BOILED VETERAN....



CRAgg'S MIND WAS NOT ON CAPTAIN BOYD'S WORDS. HE WAS WONDERING HOW HIS COMPANY COMMANDER WOULD REACT TO THEIR FIRST TASTE OF FIRE...



HAVING ANNOUNCED THE BATTLE ORDER, CAPTAIN BOYD DISMISSED THE MEN AND THEN BECKONED TO CRAgg AND LIEUTENANT ALLISON, HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND.

ALLISON, YOU WILL TAKE SERGEANT CRAgg AND TEN MEN. YOUR JOB IS TO DESTROY THE MACHINE-GUN POST ON JETTY "C". I LEAVE IT TO YOUR INITIATIVE HOW YOU DO IT.

VERY GOOD, SIR!

ALLISON'S REPLY WAS SHARP WITH ANNOYANCE, AND CRAgg GUESSED WHY.

## Line Of Fire

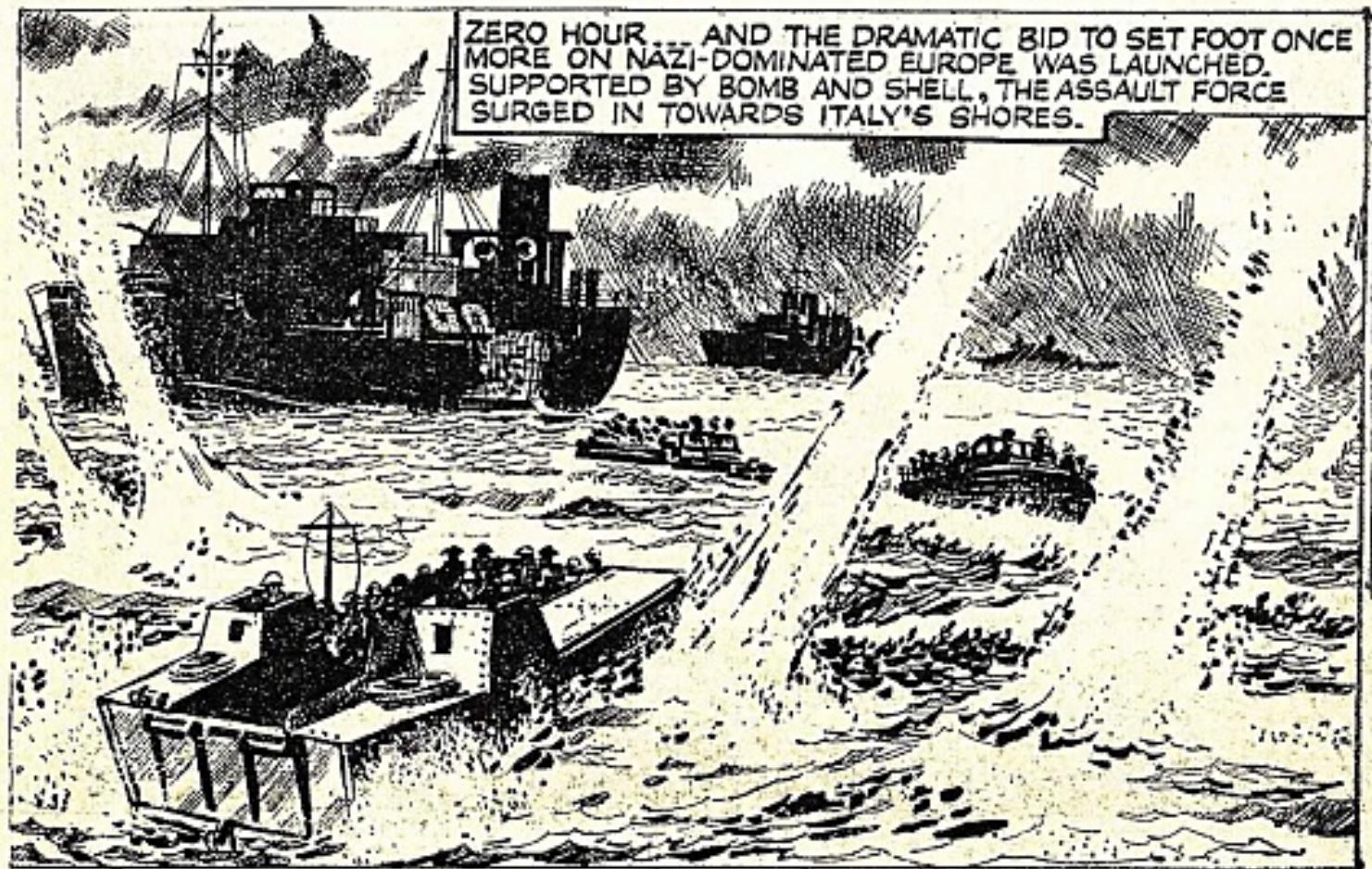
AS CAPTAIN BOYD STRODE AWAY, ALLISON TURNED TO CRAGG.

THE O.C. TALKS ABOUT MY INITIATIVE, BUT I'VE A SHREWD IDEA HE DOESN'T REALLY TRUST ME, SERGEANT.

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT, SIR. BUT HE'S CERTAINLY CHANGED SINCE THE OLD DAYS IN THE DESERT.



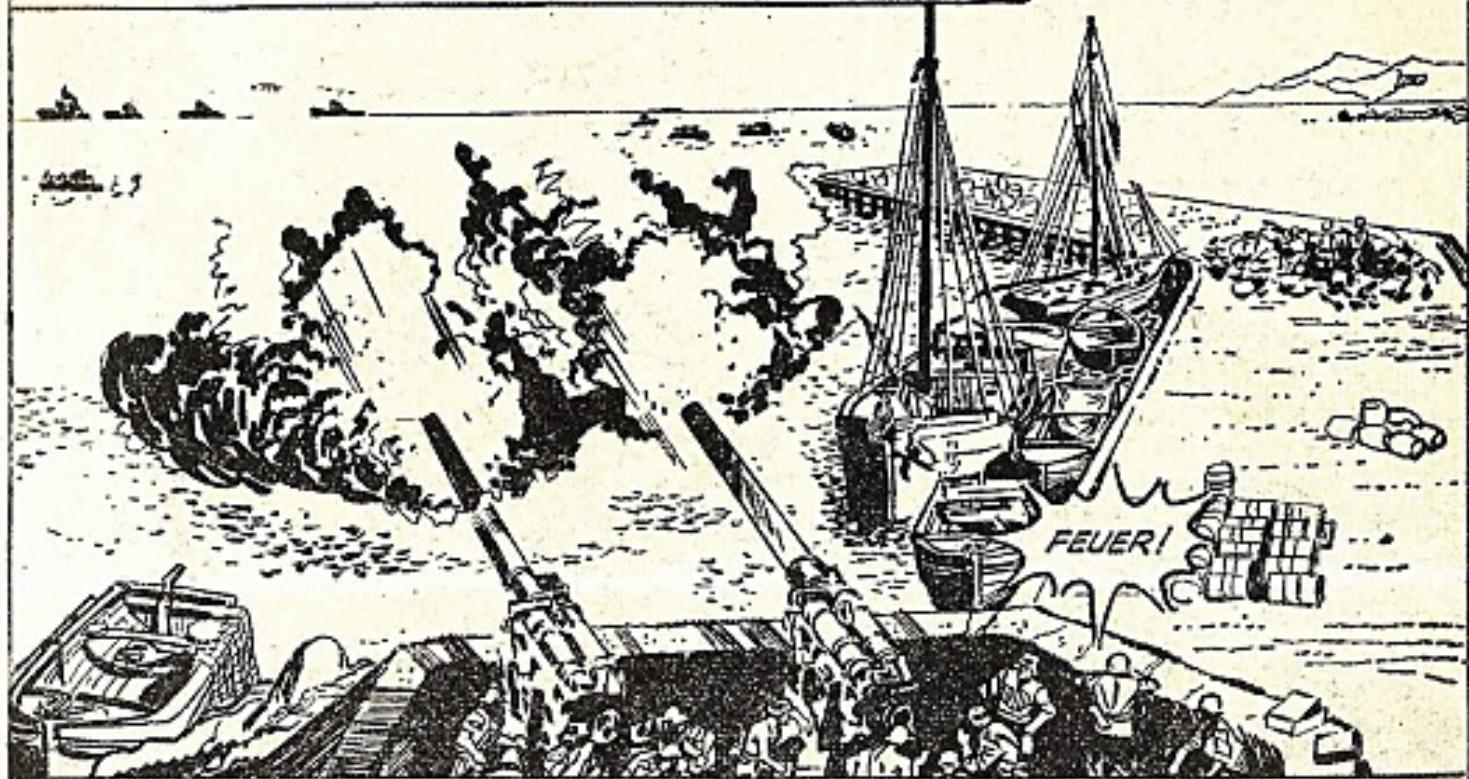
ZERO HOUR... AND THE DRAMATIC BID TO SET FOOT ONCE MORE ON NAZI-DOMINATED EUROPE WAS LAUNCHED. SUPPORTED BY BOMB AND SHELL, THE ASSAULT FORCE SURGED IN TOWARDS ITALY'S SHORES.



## Line Of Fire

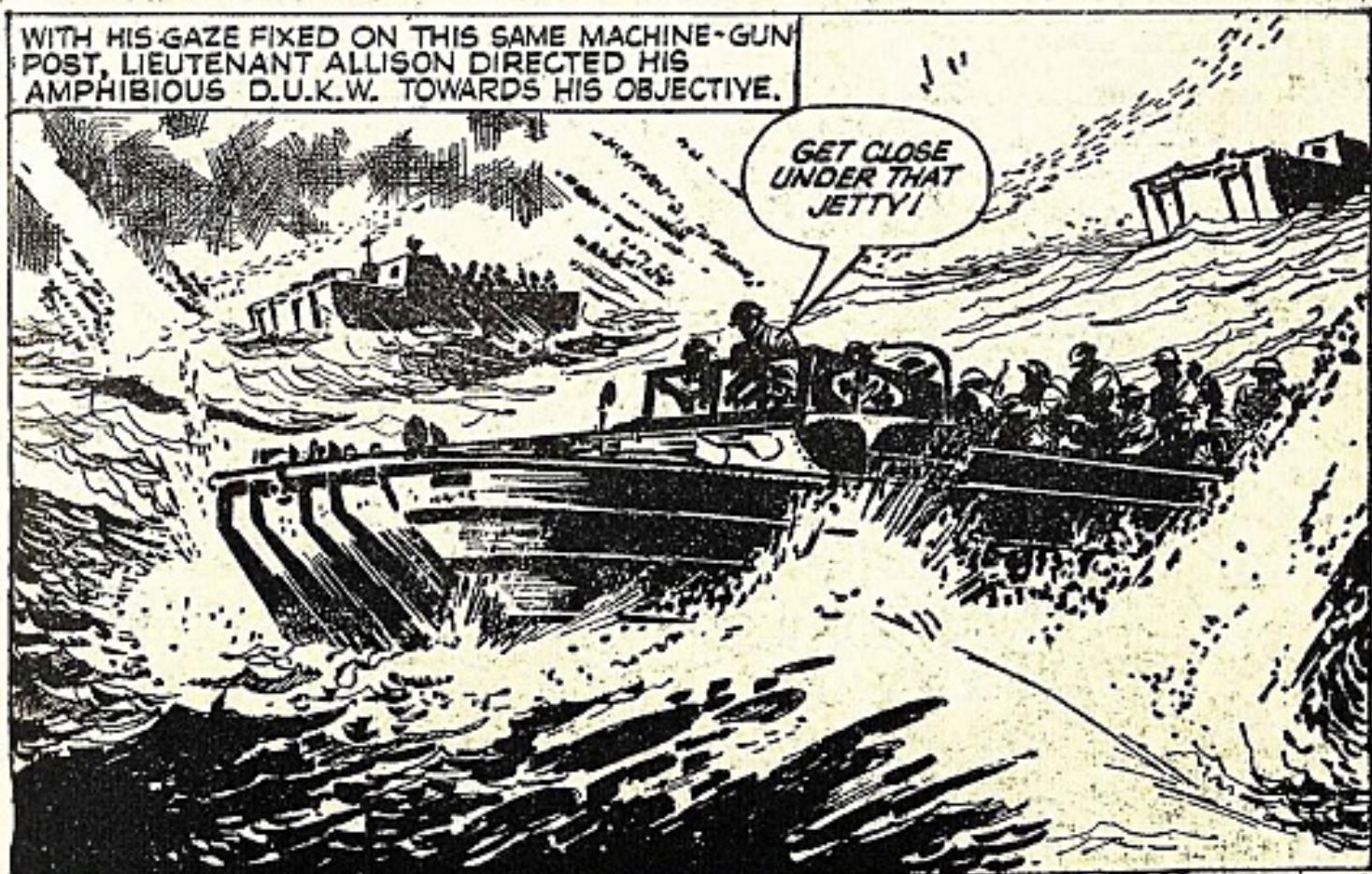
5

THE INVASION FLEET HAD BEEN KEENLY OBSERVED BY GERMAN GUN BATTERIES AND THEIR SALVOS BEGAN TO REACH OUT THREATENINGLY...



JOINING IN THIS DEFENSIVE FIRE WAS THE GUN BATTERY AT THE BASE OF JETTY 'C' AND THE MACHINE-GUN POST MIDWAY UP ITS LENGTH.

WITH HIS GAZE FIXED ON THIS SAME MACHINE-GUN POST, LIEUTENANT ALLISON DIRECTED HIS AMPHIBIOUS D.U.K.W. TOWARDS HIS OBJECTIVE.



## Line Of Fire

THROUGH A HAIL OF LASHING BULLETS, THE AMPHIBIAN WAS BROUGHT SMARTLY UNDER THE JETTY'S HEAD AND ALLISON LED THE ASSAULT.

UP ON THE JETTY,  
LADS, AND FIND  
WHAT COVER YOU  
CAN!



ALLISON'S PARTY SWARMED UP ON TO THE JETTY AND TOOK COVER BEHIND SOME OLD BARRELS, WHICH GAVE THEM TEMPORARY SHELTER FROM THE MACHINE-GUNS, THIRTY YARDS AWAY.

KEEP YOUR  
HEADS DOWN!  
WE'VE GOT TO  
CLOBBER THOSE  
SPANDAU'S BEFORE  
WE CAN MOVE FROM  
HERE!



## Line Of Fire

7

WITH TRIGGER FINGERS NERVOUSLY CROOKED, THE GERMAN MACHINE-GUNNERS KEPT THE INVADERS PINNED DOWN.

IT WAS OBVIOUS TO THE LANDING-PARTY THAT THEY COULD NOT STAY WHERE THEY WERE INDEFINITELY. SERGEANT CRAGG TURNED TO HIS OFFICER...

KEEP ALERT—  
THE ENGLANDERS  
WILL TRY TO  
RUSH US!

MAYBE I COULD WORK ALONG  
UNDER THE JETTY AND TAKE  
JERRY IN THE REAR, SIR.

GOOD IDEA,  
SERGEANT—BUT  
I'M THE ONE WHO  
OUGHT TO GO. THIS  
IS WHAT WE'LL DO...

A MINUTE LATER, CRAGG WAS HELPING LIEUTENANT ALLISON OVER THE JETTY'S SIDE...

MIND  
HOW YOU GO,  
SIR!

DON'T WORRY  
ABOUT ME, SERGEANT.  
LOOK OUT FOR MY  
SIGNAL.

## Line Of Fire

SLOWLY, THE LIEUTENANT WORKED HIS WAY ALONG THE SLIPPERY TIMBERS...



CONFIDENT OF THEIR INVULNERABLE POSITION, THE GERMANS GAVE NO THOUGHT TO THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ATTACK FROM ANYWHERE BUT THEIR IMMEDIATE FRONT - UNTIL A WARNING CRY SPUN THEM ROUND...



IT WAS CAPTAIN BOYD'S PARTY...



# Line Of Fire

9

CLAMBERING THE LAST YARD, LIEUTENANT ALLISON CAUTIOUSLY PEERED OVER THE TOP OF THE JETTY ONLY TO SEE HE HAD BEEN FORESTALLED.

COME ON,  
HANDS UP!

BOYD!  
THE ROTTEN  
POACHER'S BEATEN  
ME TO IT!



CRAGG RAN FORWARD IN TIME TO HEAR THE FURIOUS LIEUTENANT SPEAK HIS MIND...

CONFOUND IT!  
THIS TARGET WAS  
MY PIGEON!

WELL, YOU WERE  
TAKING YOUR TIME  
ABOUT IT, ALLISON.



# Line Of Fire

STILL SMARTING WITH HURT PRIDE, ALLISON GLARED AFTER BOYD AS HE ESCORTED THE PRISONERS AWAY.

HE'S DONE THAT BEFORE—TELLING ME TO USE MY INITIATIVE AND THEN STICKING HIS NOSE IN!

I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL, SIR... AND I THINK I KNOW WHY THE CAPTAIN ACTS THAT WAY...

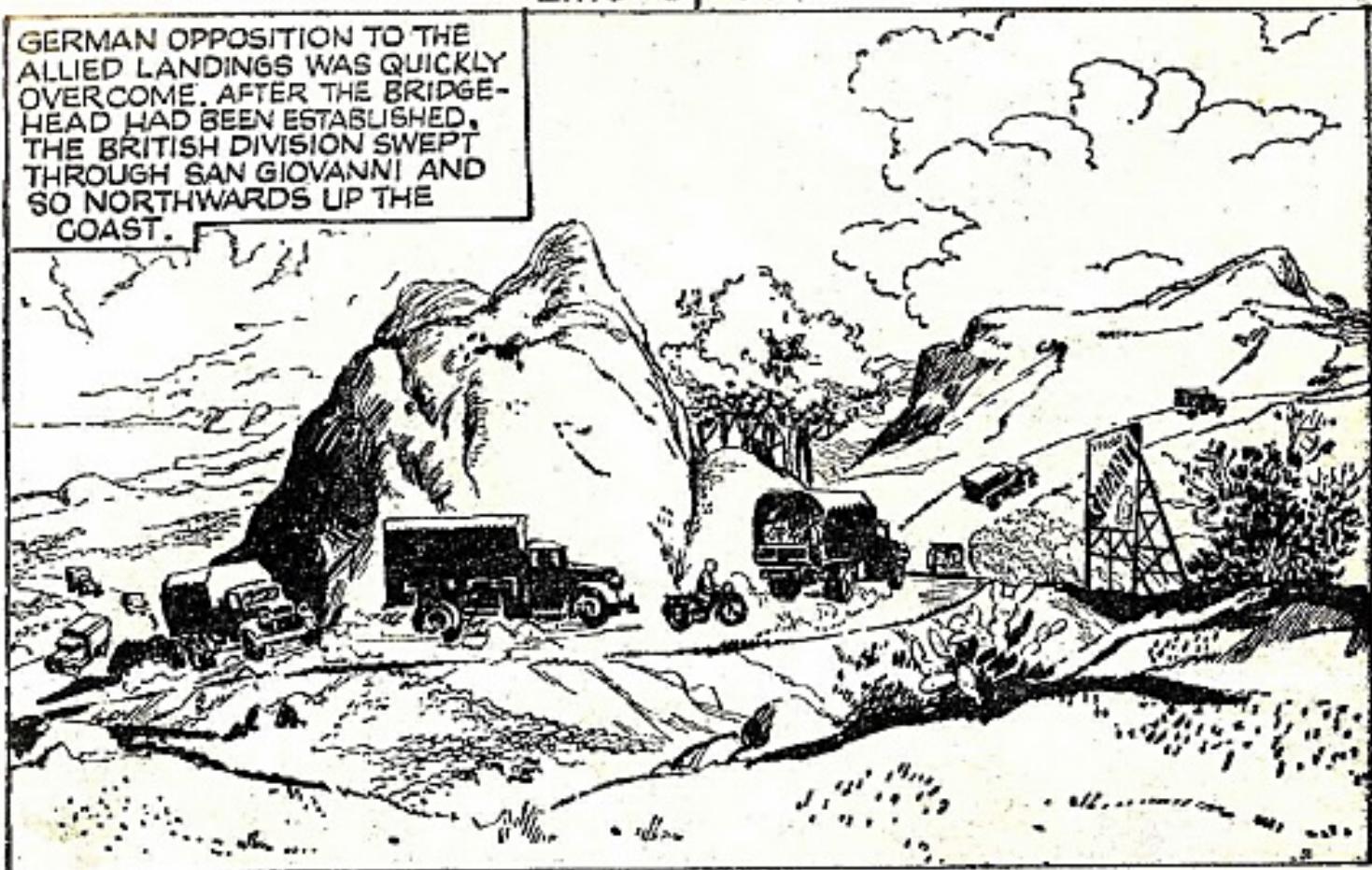


BUT FURTHER TALK WAS CUT SHORT. THE MAIN WAVE WAS POUNDING THROUGH THE SURF AND EVERY OUNCE OF COVERING FIRE WAS VITALLY NEEDED.

GOOD LADS! SPREAD OUT AND GET OFF THE BEACH!



GERMAN OPPOSITION TO THE ALLIED LANDINGS WAS QUICKLY OVERCOME. AFTER THE BRIDGE-HEAD HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED, THE BRITISH DIVISION SWEPT THROUGH SAN GIOVANNI AND SO NORTHWARDS UP THE COAST.



IN ONE OF THE TRUCKS...

I THINK YOU KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT CAPTAIN BOYD THAT I DON'T, CRAGG. CARE TO TELL ME ABOUT IT?

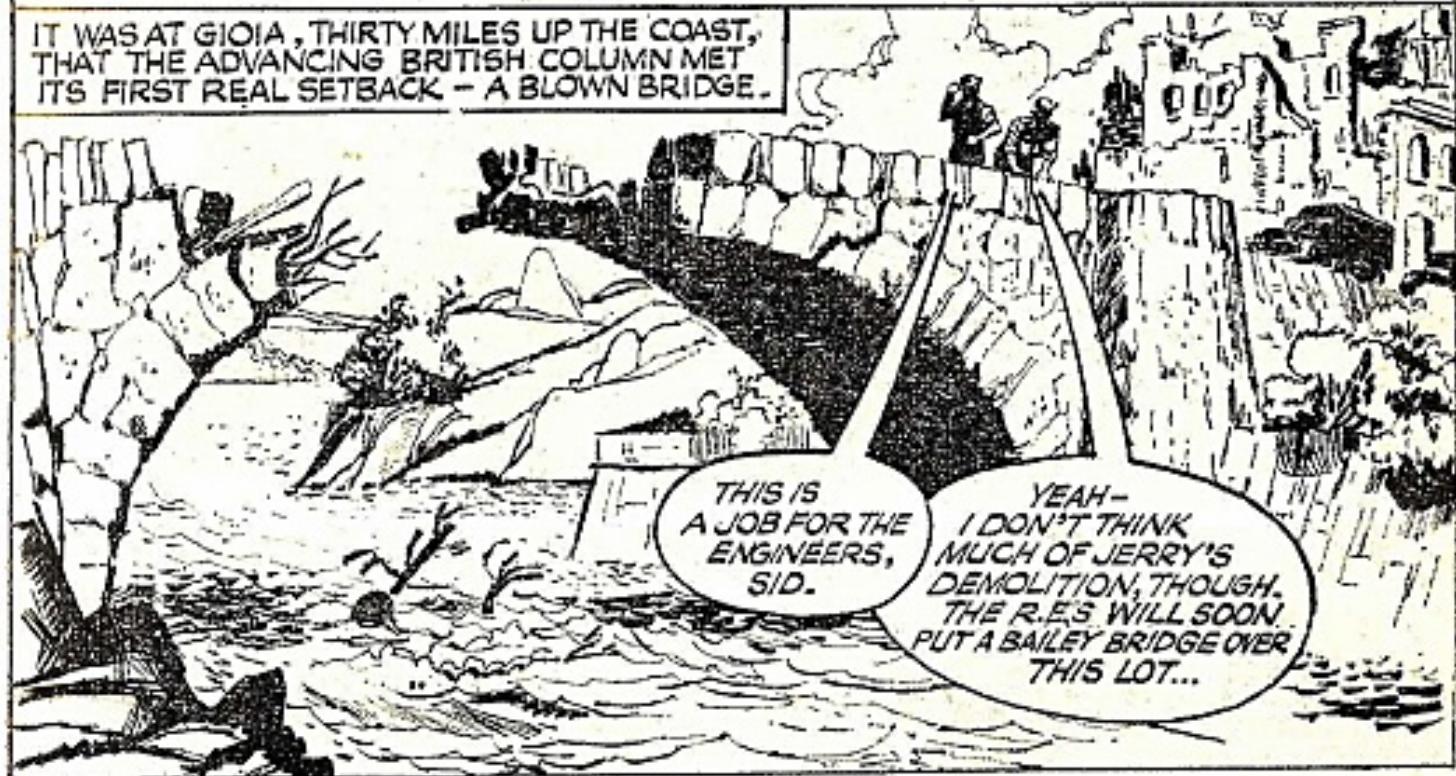
IT WAS BACK IN THE DESERT, SIR. THE CAPTAIN VOLUNTEERED TO JOIN THE CHINDITS. IN BURMA...

## 'Line Of Fire.'

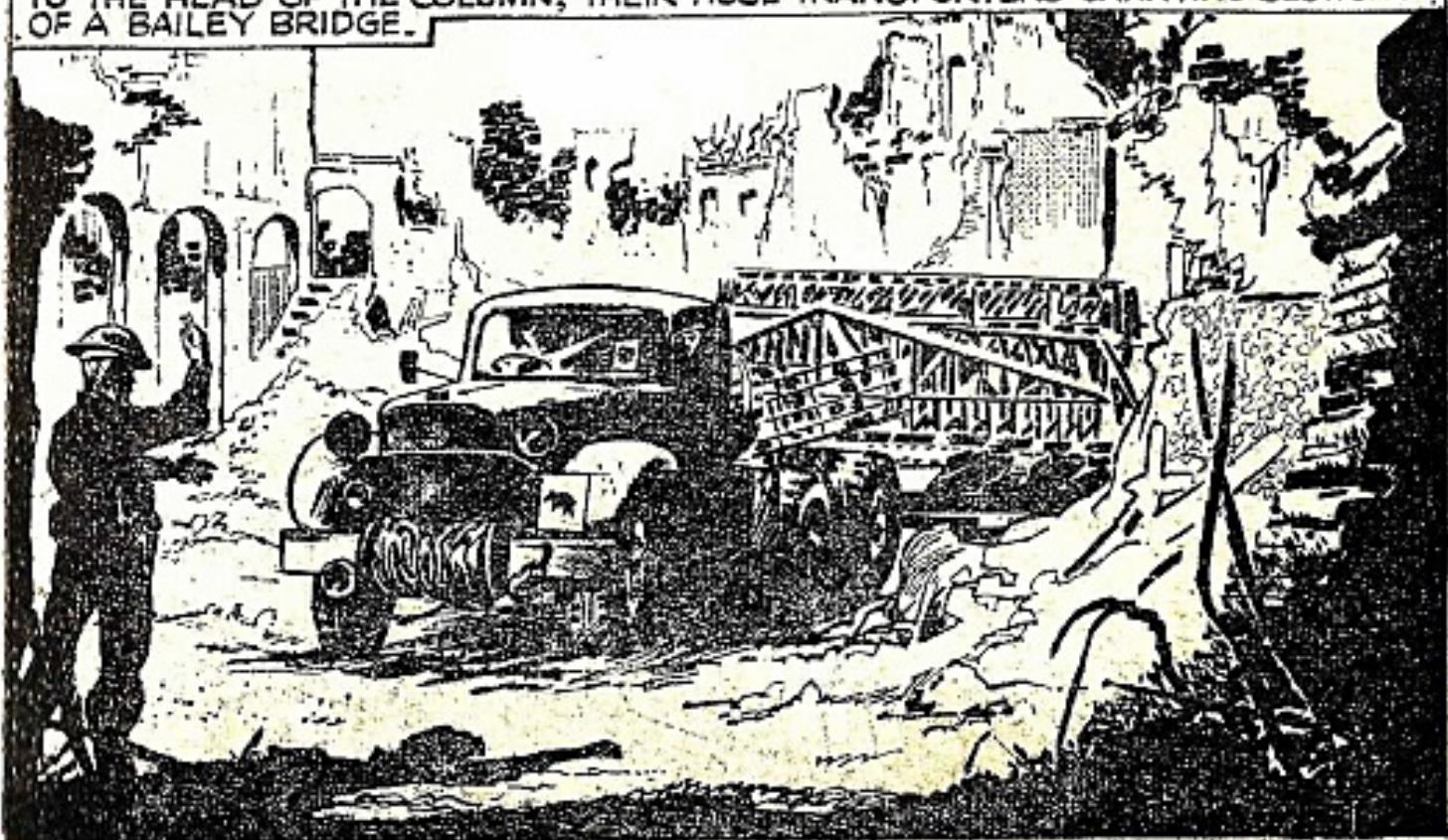


## Chapter 2. *The UNTIMELY SHOT*

IT WAS AT GIOIA, THIRTY MILES UP THE COAST, THAT THE ADVANCING BRITISH COLUMN MET ITS FIRST REAL SETBACK - A BLOWN BRIDGE.



ANSWERING THE URGENT SIGNAL, A DETACHMENT OF ROYAL ENGINEERS MOVED UP TO THE HEAD OF THE COLUMN, THEIR HUGE TRANSPORTERS CARRYING SECTIONS OF A BAILEY BRIDGE.



## Line Of Fire

EVERYTHING WAS SET FOR THE ADVANCE TO CONTINUE — UNTIL FATE STRUCK IN THE SHAPE OF AN 88MM SHELL — ON THE BRIDGE TRANSPORTER.



ONE HIGH EXPLOSIVE SHELL HAD WRECKED ALL PLANS FOR AN IMMEDIATE ADVANCE. A WORRIED BRIGADE COMMANDER CALLED AN IMPROMPTU CONFERENCE...

THAT WAS AN EIGHTY-EIGHT, GENTLEMEN — PROBABLY FROM A TIGER TANK. WHAT'S MORE, THEY'VE GOT OUR RANGE. THOSE TANKS HAVE GOT TO BE KNOCKED OUT — QUICKLY!



BUT CAPTAIN BOYD STEPPED FORWARD QUICKLY AN EXPRESSION OF FIERCE EARNESTNESS ON HIS FACE.



THE BRIGADIER HAD BEEN PREPARED TO DETAIL LIEUTENANT CARTRIGHT, A KEEN YOUNG INFANTRYMAN, TO KNOCK OUT THE TANKS. HE HAD NOT EVEN CONSIDERED THE OLDER, SENIOR MAN.

MY COMPANY CAN HANDLE IT, SIR - WE'VE GOT THE NEW PIAT ...

VERY WELL, BOYD... IF YOU'RE SO KEEN... BUT IT MUST BE QUICK!

THE CAPTAIN'S CERTAINLY A GLUTTON FOR THE TOUGH JOBS!

MY HALF OF THE COMPANY WILL CROSS DOWNSTREAM AND WORK UP, WHILE LIEUTENANT ALLISON'S HALF WILL CROSS HIGHER UP AND APPROACH FROM THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.

THERE WAS NO TIME TO BE LOST. AS BOYD HURRIEDLY BRIEFED THE MEN, SERGEANT CRAGG WATCHED HIS COMPANY COMMANDER.

THE OLD MAN'S REALLY DRIVING HIMSELF HARD. THIS TIME...

## Line Of Fire

BOYD TURNED TO LIEUTENANT ALLISON...

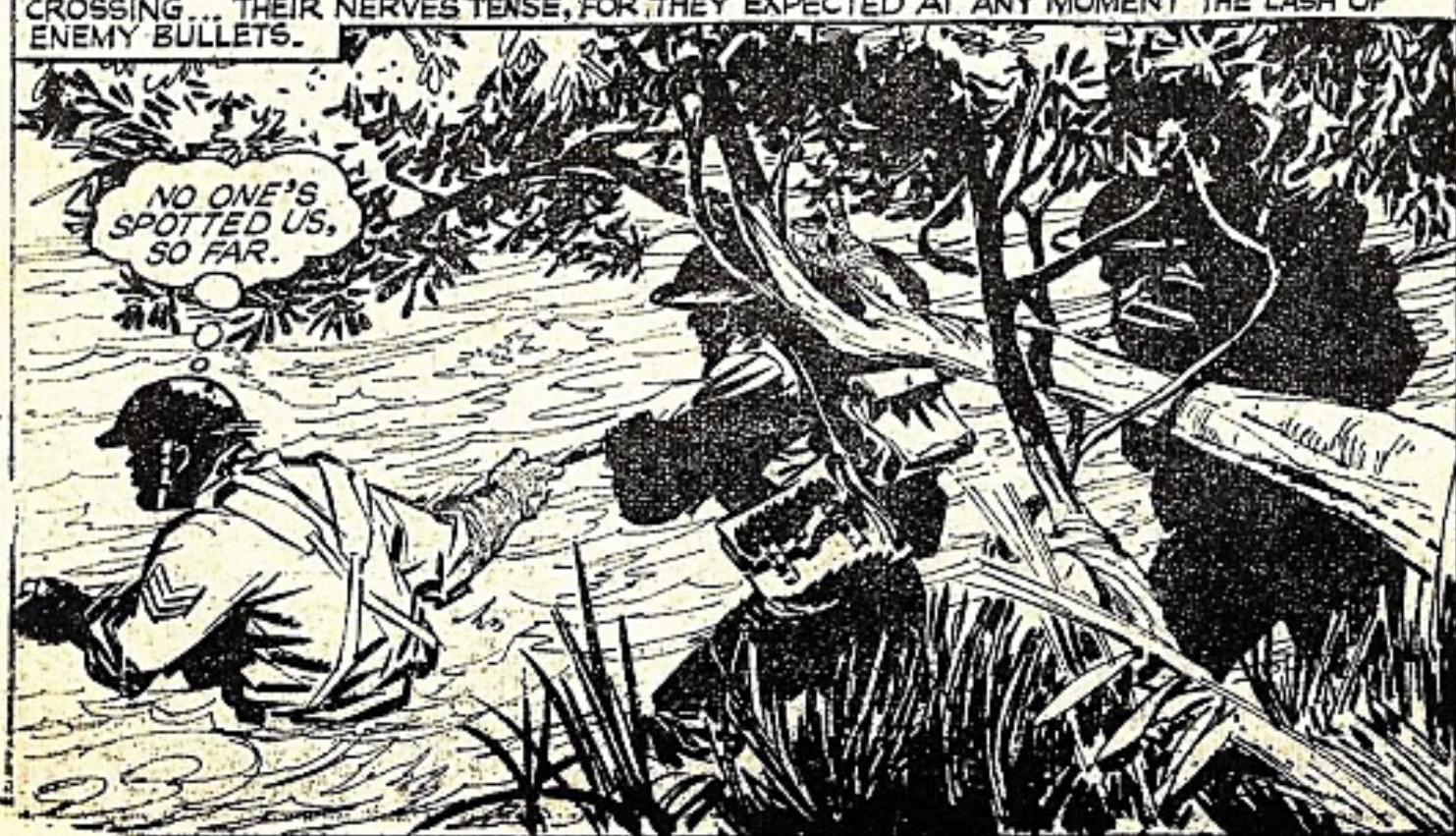
YOU TAKE SERGEANT CRAGG...  
WORK OUT YOUR  
OWN PLAN. USE  
YOUR...

INITIATIVE?  
VERY GOOD  
SIR...



THE COMPANY SPLIT INTO TWO GROUPS. WORKING UP-RIVER, ALLISON'S PARTY BEGAN THE CROSSING. THEIR NERVES TENSE, FOR THEY EXPECTED AT ANY MOMENT THE LASH OF ENEMY BULLETS.

NO ONE'S SPOTTED US, SO FAR.



CAUTIOUSLY, THEY WADED ASHORE ON THE FAR BANK.



THEY FOUND THE LITTLE TOWN DESERTED. WARILY, THEY WORKED FORWARD THROUGH THE RUBBLE-STREWN STREETS.



NO SOUND CAME TO MARK THE ENEMY'S POSITION AND ALLISON DETAILED A SCOUTING PARTY.



## Line Of Fire

SERGEANT CRAGG AND HIS DETACHMENT CIRCLED AWAY, THROUGH THE RUINED HOUSES OF THE LITTLE TOWN. SUDDENLY, HE HELD UP A WARNING HAND...



CRAGG SENT A MAN BACK TO FETCH LIEUTENANT ALLISON AND THE MAIN PARTY. THEN THE SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS MADE THE SERGEANT SPIN ROUND...



CRAGG'S SURPRISE WAS COMPLETE.



## Line Of Fire

19

PANTING FROM HIS EXERTIONS, CAPTAIN BOYD JOINED THE SERGEANT...

WE COULDN'T DO MUCH IN OUR SECTOR... THE APPROACH ON THAT SIDE IS TOO OPEN... MUCH BETTER THIS SIDE... THOUGHT I WOULD WORK ROUND AND LEND A HAND.

WE'RE DOING WELL ENOUGH, SIR!



BUT CAPTAIN BOYD IGNORED THE SERGEANT'S RESENTFUL ATTITUDE...

THE PIAT'S THE THING FOR THIS JOB, SERGEANT... IT'LL PUT A BOMB EVEN THROUGH A TIGER'S ARMOUR.



## Line Of Fire

SIGHTING THE P.I.A.T. ON THE NEAREST OF THE THREE GERMAN TANKS, THE CAPTAIN SETTLED BEHIND THIS FEARSOME WEAPON WITH A TENSE EAGERNESS...

WHAT A CHANCE!  
WE'VE GOT 'EM  
COLD!

DON'T SHOOT,  
SIR. WE'VE NO  
SUPPORT WITHOUT  
MISTER ALLISON'S  
PARTY.

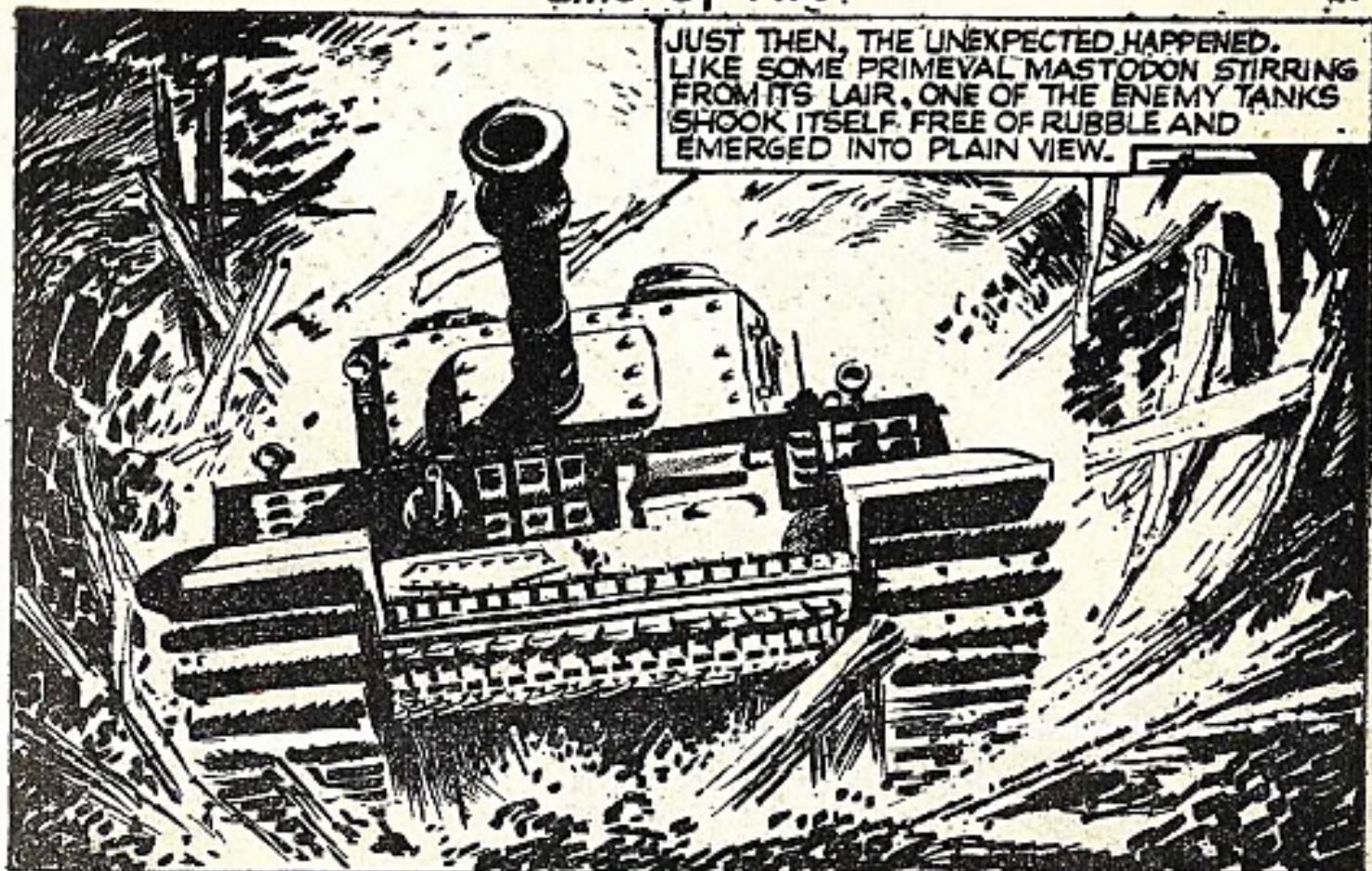
BUT LIEUTENANT ALLISON AND HIS MEN  
WERE MAKING THEIR OWN APPROACH  
TOWARDS THE ENEMY TANKS.

STILL NO SIGN  
OF BOYD. I'M SURPRISED  
HE HASN'T RUSHED  
THESE JERRIES  
SINGLE-HANDED!

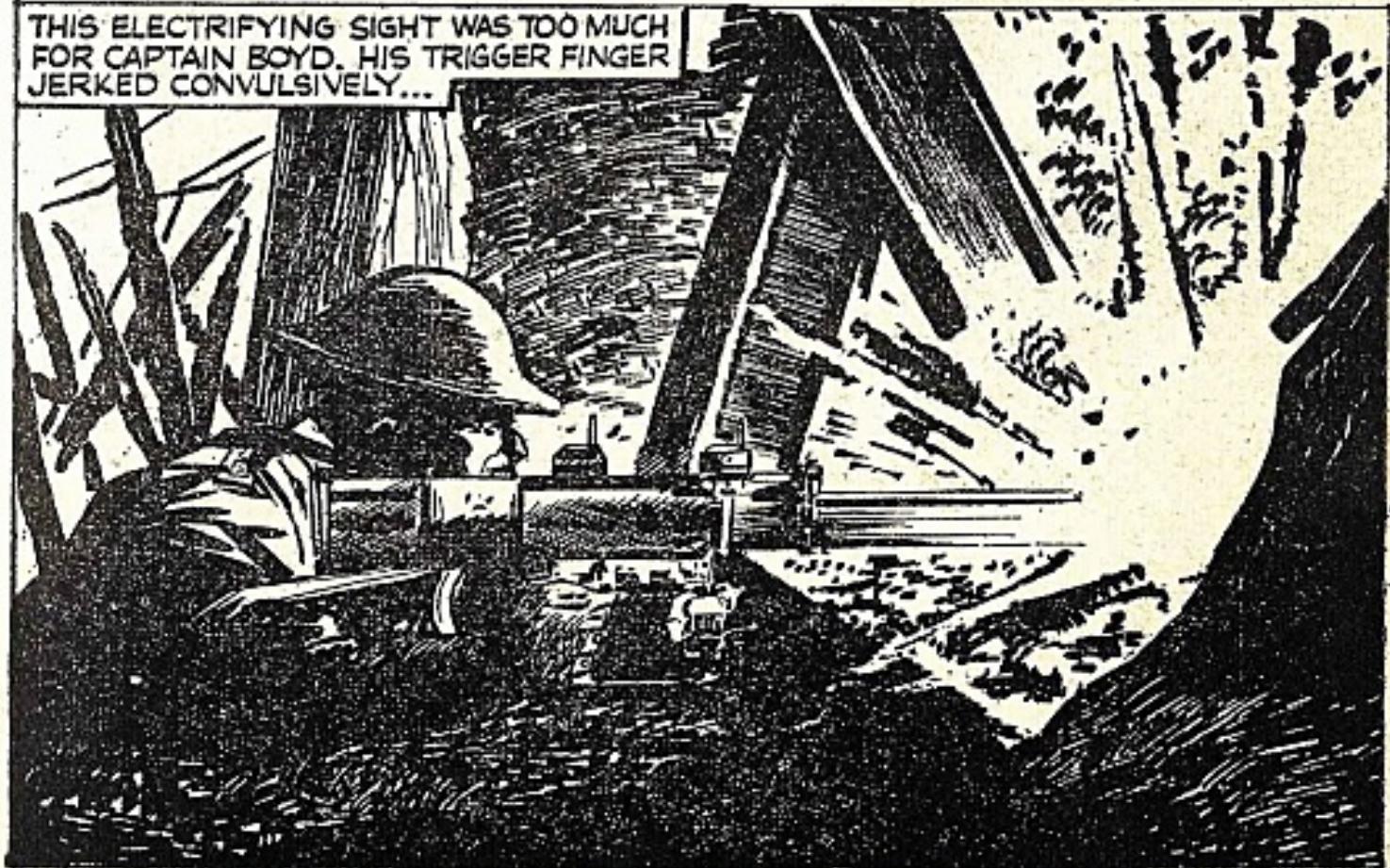
# Line Of Fire.

21

JUST THEN, THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENED.  
LIKE SOME PRIMEVAL MASTODON STIRRING  
FROM ITS LAIR, ONE OF THE ENEMY TANKS  
SHOOK ITSELF FREE OF RUBBLE AND  
EMERGED INTO PLAIN VIEW.

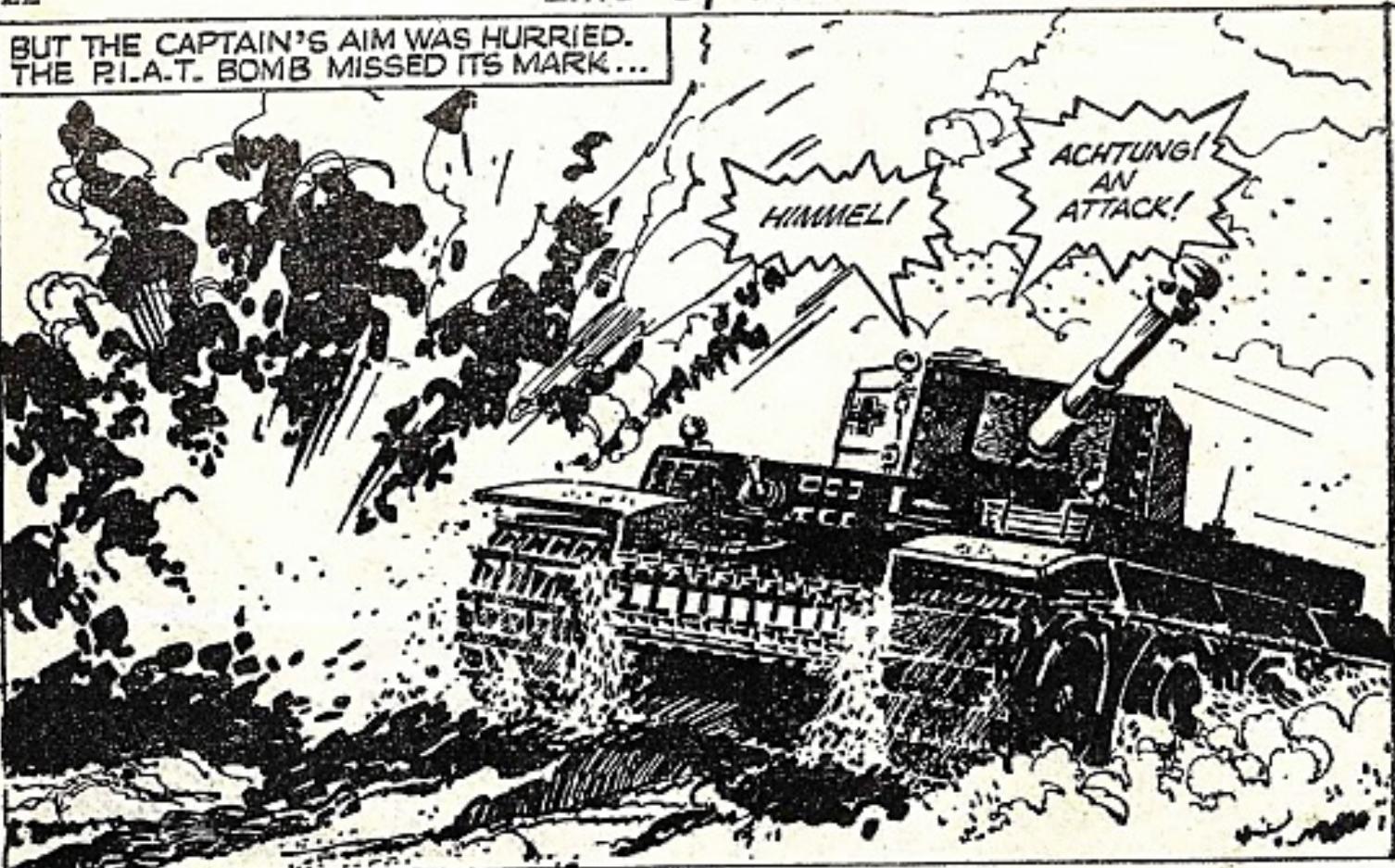


THIS ELECTRIFYING SIGHT WAS TOO MUCH  
FOR CAPTAIN BOYD. HIS TRIGGER FINGER  
JERKED CONVULSIVELY...



## Line Of Fire

BUT THE CAPTAIN'S AIM WAS HURRIED.  
THE P.I.A.T. BOMB MISSED ITS MARK...



THE TIGER'S TURRET TRAVERSED BUNDLY.  
AGAIN AND AGAIN ITS GREAT GUN SPOKE,  
SEEKING OUT ITS HIDDEN ENEMY.



88 MILLIMETRE SHELLS TORE THROUGH THE RUINED HOUSES AND SPANDAU BULLETS RICOCHETED WILDLY FROM STONE WALLS. IT WAS ONE OF THESE WHICH FOUND ITS TRAGIC MARK...

MISTER ALLISON!  
HE'S HIT!



NOT FAR AWAY, CRAGG HEARD THE SOLDIER CRY OUT THAT HIS OFFICER WAS HIT. BLACK DISMAY SURGED THROUGH HIM...

DID YOU HEAR, SIR?  
MISTER ALLISON'S  
BEEN HIT!

WHA-AT?



## Line Of Fire



SERGEANT CRAGG SPUN ROUND ON HIS MEN, HIS VOICE HARSH WITH EMOTION.

EVANS - SEE HOW MISTER ALLISON IS. THE REST OF YOU, FOLLOW ME... WE'LL GIVE THOSE TANKS HELL!

WAIT!  
YOU ARE NOT LEADING THIS ATTACK, CRAGG... I AM!



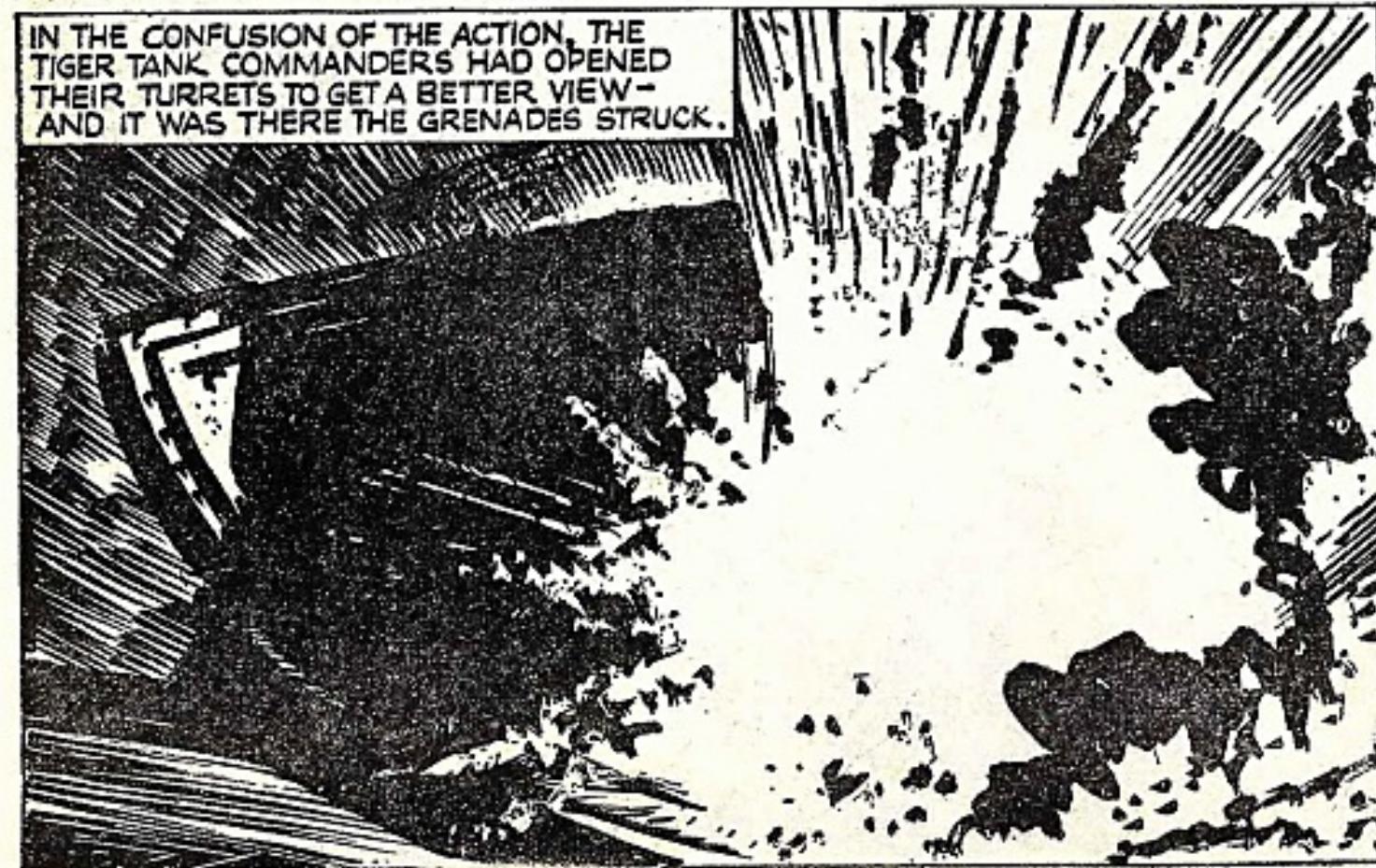
BOYD LEAD THAT ATTACK WITH ALMOST FRANTIC RECKLESSNESS.



SCORNING THE HAIL OF ENEMY FIRE, BOYD  
ONCE AGAIN LET FLY WITH HIS PLAT. HIS OWN  
VOICE ROARED IN COMPANY.



## Line Of Fire



WHERE THE BATTLE WAS THICKEST,  
THERE WAS CAPTAIN BOYD...



IN ANOTHER MINUTE IT WAS ALL OVER.  
THEN, AMIDST THE SMOKE AND CRACKLE  
OF BURNING TANKS, BOYD FOUND  
HIMSELF CONFRONTED BY AN ENRAGED  
SERGEANT CРАGG...



HIS RUGGED FACE GREY WITH DISTRESS, SERGEANT CРАGG  
STARED AFTER THE STRETCHER-BEARERS AS THEY CARRIED  
AWAY THE STILL FORM OF THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT.



## Line Of Fire.

THE SEEMING INDIFFERENCE OF THE  
REPLY STUNG THE SERGEANT TO  
OPEN ANGER...

I TELL YOU, YES!  
YOUR CONFOUNDED  
P.L.A.T GAVE THE GAME  
AWAY... AND THEY GOT  
MISTER ALLISON.  
EVERYBODY SAW'  
THAT!



REALISING HE HAD GONE TOO FAR, CRAGG WENT ON IN CALMER TONES...

I MUST SAY, SIR, THAT WHEN YOU  
DELEGATE A JOB YOU SHOULD LEAVE  
IT ALONE... AND... AND NOT  
COME INTERFERING...

THAT WILL  
BE ENOUGH, SERGEANT—  
QUITE ENOUGH!



## Chapter 3. **BREAKING POINT**

BUT THERE WAS LITTLE TIME FOR MOURNING OR CELEBRATION IN THE PUNISHING ADVANCE ALONG THE CALABRIAN COAST ROAD. THE CAPITULATION OF ITALY, FIVE DAYS AFTER THE ALLIED LANDINGS, HAD BEEN FOLLOWED BY BITTER FIGHTING AT SALERNO, WHICH HAD FALLEN TO A COMBINED SEA AND LAND ASSAULT.



ALL EYES TURNED EXPECTANTLY TOWARDS NAPLES, SIXTY MILES TO THE NORTH. BUT THE TASK WAS NOT AN EASY ONE, AS BRIGADIER BENNETT EXPLAINED...



## Line Of Fire

30

I AM SENDING REINFORCEMENTS TO THE AIRFIELD AT ONCE. THE FOLLOWING OFFICERS WILL REPORT TO ME...



WHEN HE HEARD HIS OWN NAME CALLED, CAPTAIN BOYD FELT A STRANGE PANG, HALF FEAR, HALF-PRIDE. HE HAD BEEN CHOSEN!

SERGEANT CRAGG, BUSY AMONGST THE TRUCKS IN THE VEHICLE PARK, HEARD THE BRIGADIER'S PARTING WORDS TO CAPTAIN BOYD.

... AND SO I EXPECT NOTHING BUT THE BEST FROM YOU, BOYD.

YOU SHALL HAVE IT, SIR!

A PEP TALK FROM THE BRIGADIER! BOYD WILL BE INSUFFERABLE AFTER THIS!



BY THE EVENING, THE RELIEF FORCE HAD MOVED THIRTY MILES INLAND TO THE DEFENCE OF PONTECORVINO AIRFIELD.



BY DARK, CRAGG'S MEN HAD DUG THEMSELVES IN. ONE THING PLEASED THEM MIGHTILY, THE RECENT ISSUE OF THE P.I.A.T. TO PLATOONS.





SERGEANT CRAGG HAD ALREADY RECONNOITRED THE GROUND AHEAD.  
NOW, AS THE MOON ROSE, HE GAVE HIS ORDERS . . .

WILCOX— TAKE YOUR SECTION AND  
WAIT IN THAT CLUMP OF TREES. IF  
JERRY MAKES FOR US, YOU'VE  
GOT HIM NICELY IN THE FLANK!

GOOD IDEA,  
SARGE!



SPRINTING THE HUNDRED YARDS OR SO TO THEIR  
COVER, WILCOX AND HIS SECTION SETTLED  
DOWN WATCHFULLY.

THE SARGE DON'T  
MISS NOTHING,  
DOES HE?

NEITHER WILL WE  
... WITH THESE  
P.I.A.T.S!



## Line Of Fire

THE HOURS DRAGGED BY. BRIGHT MOONLIGHT FLOODED THE SILENT SCENE. THEN CRAGG'S KEEN EYES SUDDENLY CAUGHT A DISTANT BLUR OF MOVEMENT...

HULLO... LOOKS LIKE... YES! TANKS... AND COMING THIS WAY!



NEXT MOMENT, THERE WAS A SQUEAL OF BRAKES BEHIND HIM...

IT'S BOYD... OF ALL THE FUSSY, INTERFERING...



IN RESPONSE TO BOYD'S QUERULOUS INQUIRIES, CRAGG TOLD HIS COMPANY COMMANDER OF THE DEFENSIVE MEASURES HE HAD TAKEN... BUT BOYD SHOOK HIS HEAD IRRITABLY...



SEETHING WITH IMPOTENT EXASPERATION, SERGEANT CRAGG DESPATCHED A RUNNER TO CORPORAL WILLCOX. THEN HE TURNED TO THE SENIOR MAN...

ONE MINUTE YOU'RE DEMANDING INITIATIVE, SIR, AND THE NEXT YOU'RE CHUCKING IT BACK AT ME. WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?



## Line Of Fire.

HEARING THE ALTERCATION, CRAGG'S MEN BECAME 'PREY TO UNEASINESS. IT SHOWED IN THE FACE OF THE RUNNER WHO CAME PANTING TO WILLCOX'S SIDE...



IN GRUMBLING RESIGNATION, WILLCOX DID AS HE WAS TOLD. BUT AS THEY BEGAN TO CROSS THE OPEN SPACE, A SUDDEN CRACKLE OF MACHINE-GUN FIRE GREETED THEM.



AT THE SOUND OF FIRING, SERGEANT CRAGG WHIPPED HIS BINOCULARS UP TO HIS EYES - AND GROANED AT WHAT HE SAW.

IT'S WILLCOX'S MEN! THEY'RE CAUGHT IN THE OPEN!



SIMULTANEOUSLY, THE TANK'S MAIN ARMAMENT, 75 MILLIMETRE GUNS, RANGED ON TO THE MAIN DEFENSIVE POSITION HELD BY CRAGG'S MEN...



ALTHOUGH THE ATTACK HAD BEEN HALF-EXPECTED, THE HEATED ARGUMENT BETWEEN BOYD AND CRAGG HAD UNSETTLED THE MEN AND WASTED CRITICAL TIME.

WE HAVEN'T BEEN GIVEN THE RANGE!

JUST KEEP SHOOTING!



## Line Of Fire



THOSE THAT SURVIVED FELL BACK IN DISORDER ACROSS THE AIRFIELD. FOR THE DISMAYED CAPTAIN BOYD, THE CLANKING ADVANCE OF THE PANZERS WAS THE DEATH-RATTLE OF DEFEAT.



THE CHILL DAWN SAW THE IGNOMINIOUS AND COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF THE AIRFIELD'S DEFENCES. DISGUSTED MEN GRUMBLED BITTERLY TO EACH OTHER.

WE SHOULD HAVE NAILED THOSE TANKS WHAT THE BLAZES WENT WRONG?

SEARCH ME!



THE COMPANY ARRIVED BACK AT BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS. AS THE MEN DEBussed, THE ROVING EYE OF SERGEANT CRAGG FASTENED UPON THE DISPIRITED CAPTAIN BOYD.

THERE'S AN OLD SAYING,  
CAPTAIN BOYD — THERE'S NO  
SENSE IN HAVING A  
WATCH DOG AND DOING  
THE BARKING YOURSELF.

WHAT'S THAT?  
WHAT THE DEVIL DO YOU  
MEAN,  
CRAGG?



## Line Of Fire



THE N.C.O. KNEW HE WAS STICKING HIS NECK OUT TOO FAR, BUT HE COULD CONTAIN HIMSELF NO LONGER. BUT THE FURIOUS OUTBURST HE EXPECTED DID NOT COME. WITH A CURIOUS CHOKING SOUND, CAPTAIN BOYD TURNED ABRUPTLY AWAY.



## Chapter 4. THREAT to the FLANK

THE GERMAN HIGH COMMAND WAS QUICK TO SEE THE DANGER IN THE ALLIED SEIZURE OF THE HARBOUR AT SALERNO. THEIR REACTION WAS IMMEDIATE AND POWERFUL. A PANZER DIVISION WAS ORDERED TO ATTACK WITH THE OBJECT OF DRIVING A WEDGE BETWEEN THE ALLIED COASTAL FORCES.

OUR ARMOUR WILL FIND A WAY  
THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS AND FALL  
UPON THE ENEMY'S RIGHT FLANK...  
AND THRUST THEM BACK INTO  
THE SEA!



THE PANZER DIVISION, ONCE DESTROYED AT STALINGRAD, BUT NOW RE-FORMED INTO A MIGHTIER FIGHTING MACHINE THAN EVER, PREPARED FOR BATTLE.



# Line Of Fire

WELL AWARE THAT SUCH A THREAT MIGHT DEVELOP, THE ALLIES SENT OUT A FLANKING FORCE INTO THE MOUNTAINS UNDER THE COMMAND OF A BRITISH COLONEL.

OUR JOB IS TO COMB THESE MOUNTAIN PASSES AND BLOCK ANY ATTEMPT BY THE ENEMY TO FILTER THROUGH. NOW, IF THE OFFICERS WILL GATHER ROUND...



AMONGST THOSE TROOPS GUARDING THE TORTUOUS DEFILES OF THE CALABRIAN HEIGHTS WAS CAPTAIN BOYD'S COMPANY. AND WITH THE RECENT DEFEAT AT THE AIRFIELD STILL FRESH IN HIS MIND, SERGEANT CRAGG FOUND HIS EYES CONSTANTLY STRAYING TO THE STRANGE MAN WHO WAS THEIR LEADER.

HE HARDLY SAYS A WORD... YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT HE'S THINKING.



PRESENTLY, THE CAPTAIN CALLED CRAGG OVER. THERE WAS AN EDGE OF EXCITEMENT IN HIS VOICE.

LOOK, SERGEANT —  
GERMAN TANKS... THREE  
OF THEM!

COULD BE A  
RECCE PARTY FOR A  
LARGER FORCE.

EAGERLY, BOYD LED THE PARTY,  
SCRAMBLING DOWN THE SLOPES...

WE MUSTN'T LET  
THOSE TANKS OUT  
OF OUR SIGHT...  
HURRY!

SERGEANT CRAGG'S GUESS WAS RIGHT. THE TRIO OF ENEMY TANKS WAS PROBING A PATH THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS.

THIS LOOKS PROMISING.  
SCHULTZ — ADVANCE!

JAWOHL, HERR  
LEUTNANT!

## Line Of Fire

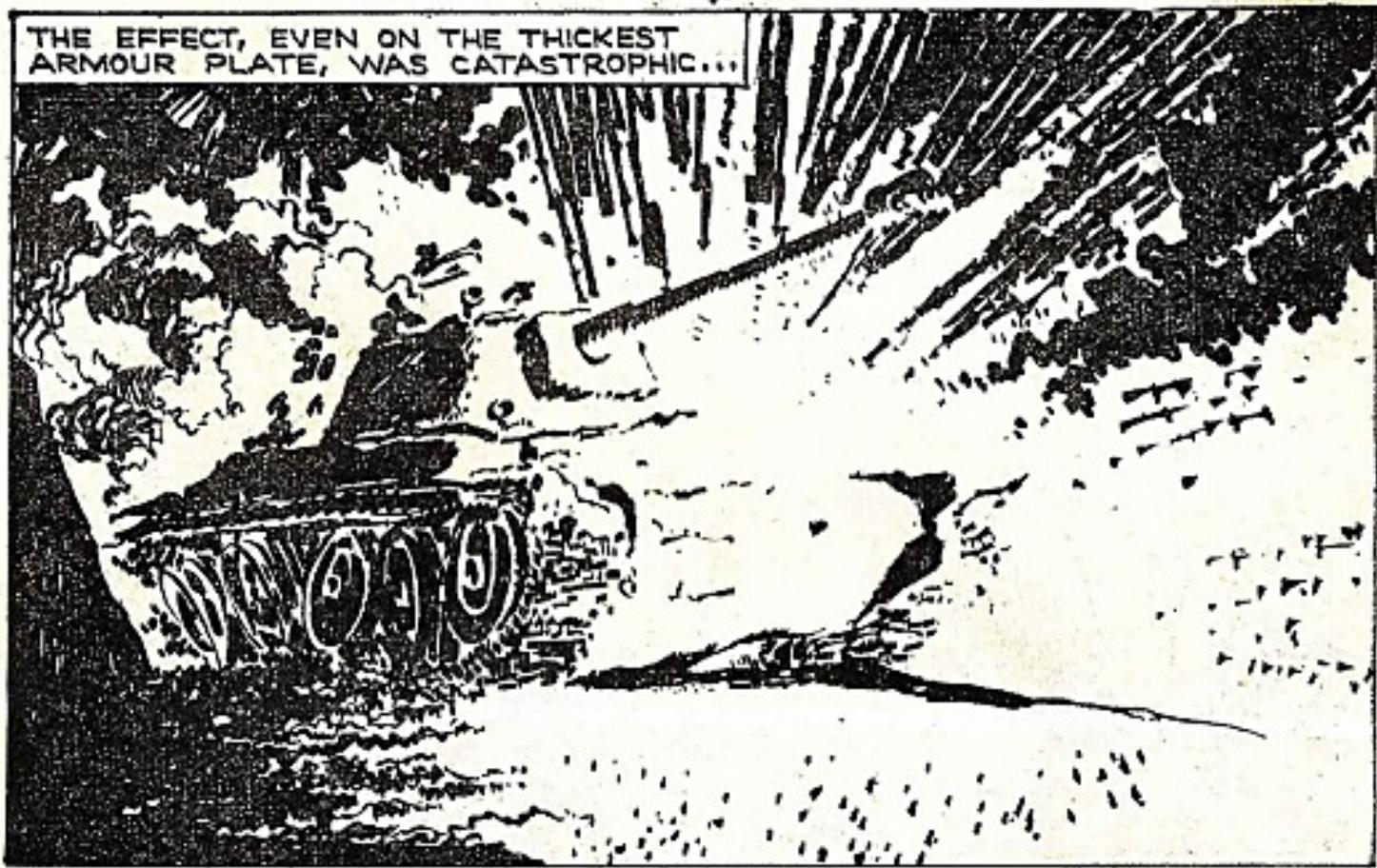
CAPTAIN BOYD WAVED HIS MEN TO COVER JUST AS THE TANKS MOVED ON AGAIN.



AS THE TENSE MOMENTS WENT BY, THE DISTANT CLANK OF ARMOUR GREW TO A STEADY RUMBLE. STEADILY, THE P.I.A.T.S RANGED ON THE ENEMY VEHICLES. THEN THE CRASH OF THIS DEADLY NEW ARTILLERY ECHOED AND RE-ECHOED ALONG THE MOUNTAIN PASS.



THE EFFECT, EVEN ON THE THICKEST ARMOUR PLATE, WAS CATASTROPHIC...



AS THE BRITISH FOUND THE RANGE, SO THEIR SHATTERING ANTI-TANK WEAPONS WROUGHT TERRIBLE HAVOC...



ONLY ONE TANK SURVIVED THAT FEARFUL BARRAGE.

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Line Of Fire

DAZED AND SHAKEN, THE TANK CREWS FROM THE KNOCKED-OUT PANZERS STUMBLLED FORWARD WITH TWITCHING HANDS RAISED IN SUBMISSION...



BUT THE PRISONERS WERE SULLENLY SILENT AND THIS SEEMED TO STRETCH THE CAPTAIN'S TAUT NERVES TO SNAPPING POINT...

STUBBORN SWINE! I'M SURE THERE'S A STRONG FORCE OF ENEMY TANKS SOMEWHERE NEAR.

...AND THAT THIRD TANK WENT BACK TO TIP THEM OFF ABOUT US!



# Line Of Fire

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SEEMINGLY UNABLE TO STAND STILL AND MARSHAL HIS THOUGHTS PROPERLY, CAPTAIN BOYD HAD THEM ALL SCRAMBLING ONCE MORE TO THE HEIGHTS. THERE, HE FEVERISHLY SCANNED THE CRAGGY DEFILES BELOW.

THERE THEY ARE!  
PANZER TANKS!  
HOW MANY?

MAYBE A DOZEN...  
COULD BE  
MORE.



CAPTAIN BOYD'S IMPATIENCE NOW TURNED TO A BURNING EXCITEMENT. THE SERGEANT EYED HIM NARROWLY...

IF WE COULD HANDLE THIS OURSELVES, CRAGG —  
WHAT A FEATHER FOR THE COMPANY!

YOU MEAN... WHAT  
A FEATHER FOR  
CAPTAIN BOYD!



SEEING THE STRANGE, WILD LOOK IN THE OTHER'S EYE,  
CRAGG BECAME UNEASY...

BUT THERE MIGHT BE MORE TANKS  
BEYOND THE ESCARPMENT, SIR. SURELY  
WE SHOULD REPORT THEM.

RUBBISH! ALL THAT WORRIES  
ME IS, WHICH WAY WILL  
THE ENEMY COME?



PLAINLY RACKED BY INDECISION, CAPTAIN BOYD  
AT LAST MADE UP HIS MIND.

WE'LL HAVE TO SPLIT FORCES,  
SERGEANT. YOU TAKE A HALF-COMPANY  
AND WATCH OUT ON THAT NORTH DEFILE.  
THE REST OF US WILL TAKE THE  
SOUTH ONE.



CRAgg OBEDIED, BUT WITH MISGIVINGS. AS HE LED HIS MEN AWAY,  
A FAMILIAR INJUNCTION BROUGHT A SARDONIC GRIN TO HIS TANNED FACE.

I RELY ON YOU,  
CRAgg... USE  
YOUR HEAD.

NOW WHERE HAVE  
I HEARD THAT  
BEFORE!



FREE OF BOYD'S FUSSY LEADERSHIP, SERGEANT CRAgg  
LED THE RUGGED DESCENT WITH LIGHTER HEART...

AT LAST I CAN FIGHT  
IN MY OWN WAY!



## Line Of Fire

AFTER TEN MINUTES HARD GOING, CRAGG ROUNDED A CORNER OF A LEDGE AND STARED IN SURPRISE.

WHAT THE....!

IT'S A PONGO SERGEANT!

TELL HIM THIS IS NAVY TERRITORY.



THE REASON FOR THE NAVY'S PRESENCE ON THAT LOFTY PERCH WAS SIMPLE - IT WAS A FORWARD OBSERVATION POST.

WE'RE SPOTTING FOR THE FLEET.

THE FLEET? YOU MEAN NAVAL GUNS?

WE TALK THEM DOWN ON THE TARGET. SEEN ANY SIGNS OF JERRY?



## Line Of Fire

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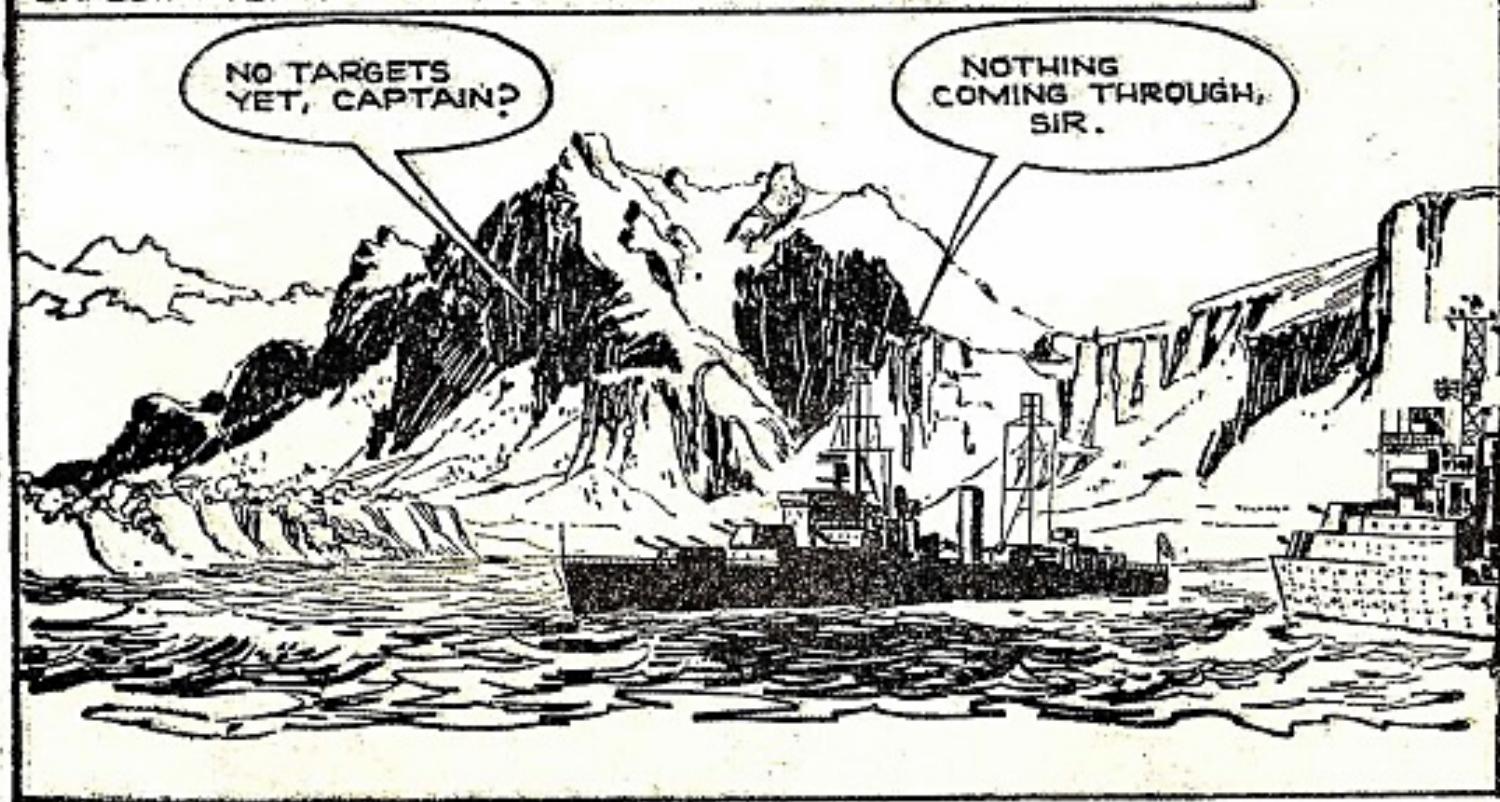
IT WAS NOW SERGEANT CRAGG'S TURN TO FEEL THE PANGS OF INDECISION. SHOULD HE TELL THESE NAVY MEN OF THE ENEMY'S APPROACH AND SO SPOIL CAPTAIN BOYD'S FIERCE BID FOR HONOUR...?



OFF-SHORE, UNITS OF THE POWERFUL BRITISH FLEET STEAMED PATIENTLY BACK AND FORTH, THEIR MASSIVE GUNS TRAINED EXPECTANTLY ON THE NEARBY MOUNTAIN SLOPES.

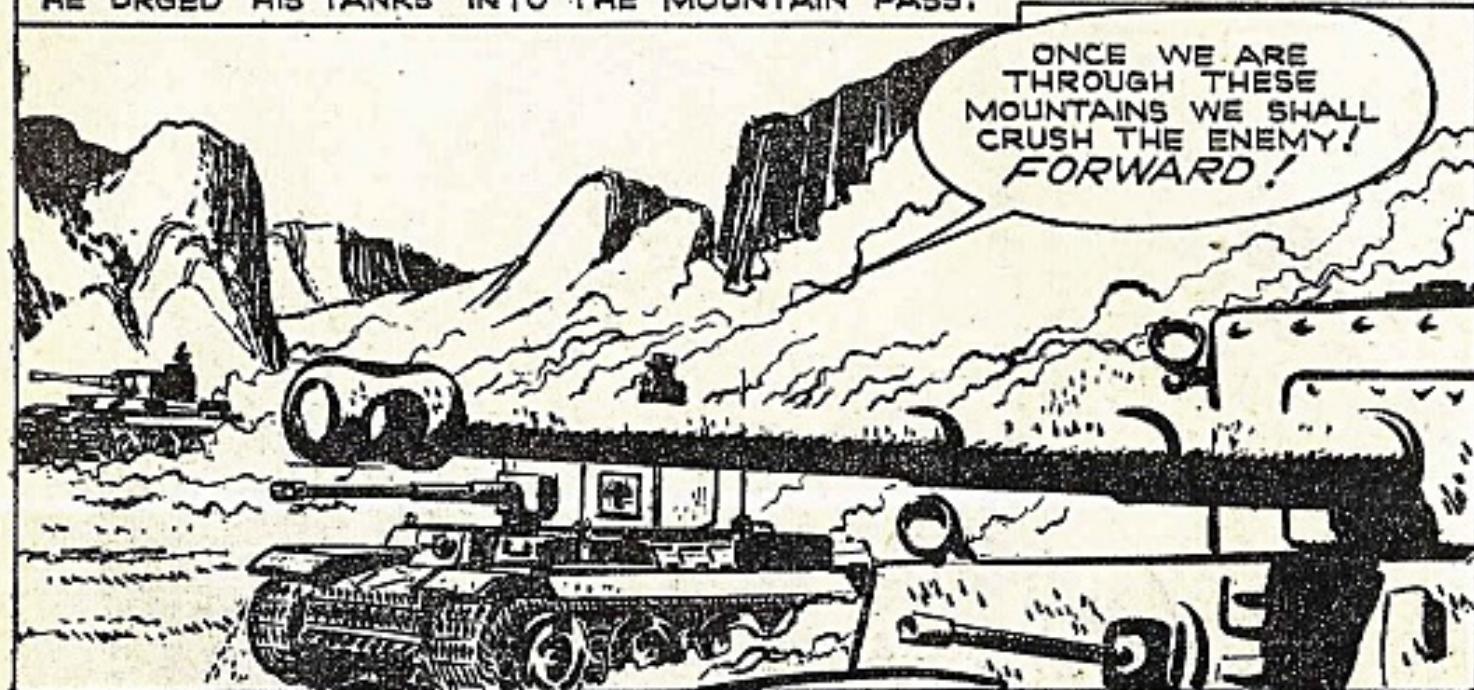
NO TARGETS YET, CAPTAIN?

NOTHING COMING THROUGH, SIR.



## Chapter 5. The BARRAGE

MEANWHILE, THE COMMANDER OF THE PANZER DIVISION FANCIED HE SAW THE REWARDS OF HIS GENERAL'S BOLD STRATEGY. EXULTANTLY, HE URGED HIS TANKS INTO THE MOUNTAIN PASS.



BY NOW SERGEANT CRAGG HAD MADE UP HIS MIND. IF THE ENEMY TANKS IGNORED BOYD'S DEFILE AND ADVANCED DOWN THE OTHER, THEN THEY WERE BETTER LEFT TO THE NAVY'S GUNS.



BUT HALF AN HOUR PASSED AND THERE WAS NO SIGN OF THE ENEMY TANKS. CRAGG BECAME WORRIED...

NOTHING IN SIGHT YET?

MAYBE THEY'VE TAKEN THE SOUTH SIDE, SIR.  
I WONDER IF CAPTAIN BOYD IS OKAY?



SUDDENLY LIEUTENANT BURKE, THE NAVAL OFFICER, BARKED A WARNING AND ALL WAS INSTANT EXCITEMENT...

HERE THEY COME!  
BY HEAVENS,  
LOOK!

THERE'S  
DOZENS OF  
THEM!

TARGET  
SIGHTED, EVANS!  
STAND BY!

AYE, AYE,  
SIR!

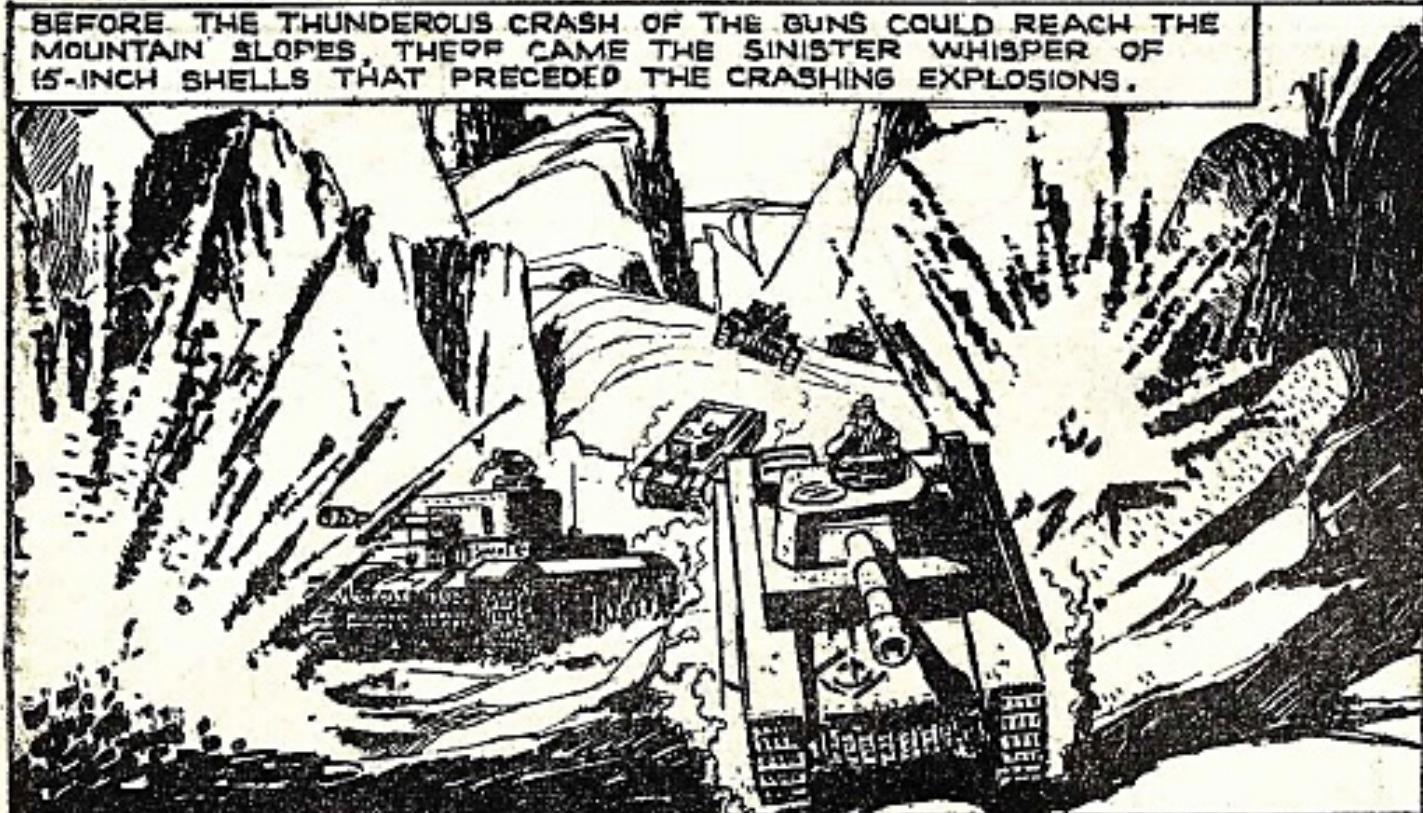


## Line Of Fire

IN SECONDS, THE NEWS WAS FLASHED TO THE RADIO ROOM ABOARD THE ADMIRAL'S FLAGSHIP. THE IMMENSE MECHANISM OF NAVAL GUNNERY SWUNG INTO ACTION.



BEFORE THE THUNDEROUS CRASH OF THE GUNS COULD REACH THE MOUNTAIN SLOPES, THERE CAME THE SINISTER WHISPER OF 15-INCH SHELLS THAT PRECEDED THE CRASHING EXPLOSIONS.



THE FIRST SALVO WAS A NEAR MISS BUT ITS OMINOUS MEANING STRUCK COLD FEAR INTO EVERY GERMAN HEART...

WITH EARS RINGING FROM THE VIOLENT ECHOES, THE OBSERVERS ON THE LEDGE HIGH ABOVE FELT THEIR PULSES RACE... BUT FOR VERY DIFFERENT REASONS...



CRAGG CLAPPED THE FIELD GLASSES TO HIS EYES AND GASPED AT WHAT HE SAW ...



## Line Of Fire

BUT ALREADY LIEUTENANT BURKE WAS COOLLY CORRECTING THE SHOOT.

STOP! STOP THE SHOOTING!  
MY OWN COMPANY'S DOWN THERE  
... CAPTAIN BOYD AND THE OTHERS!

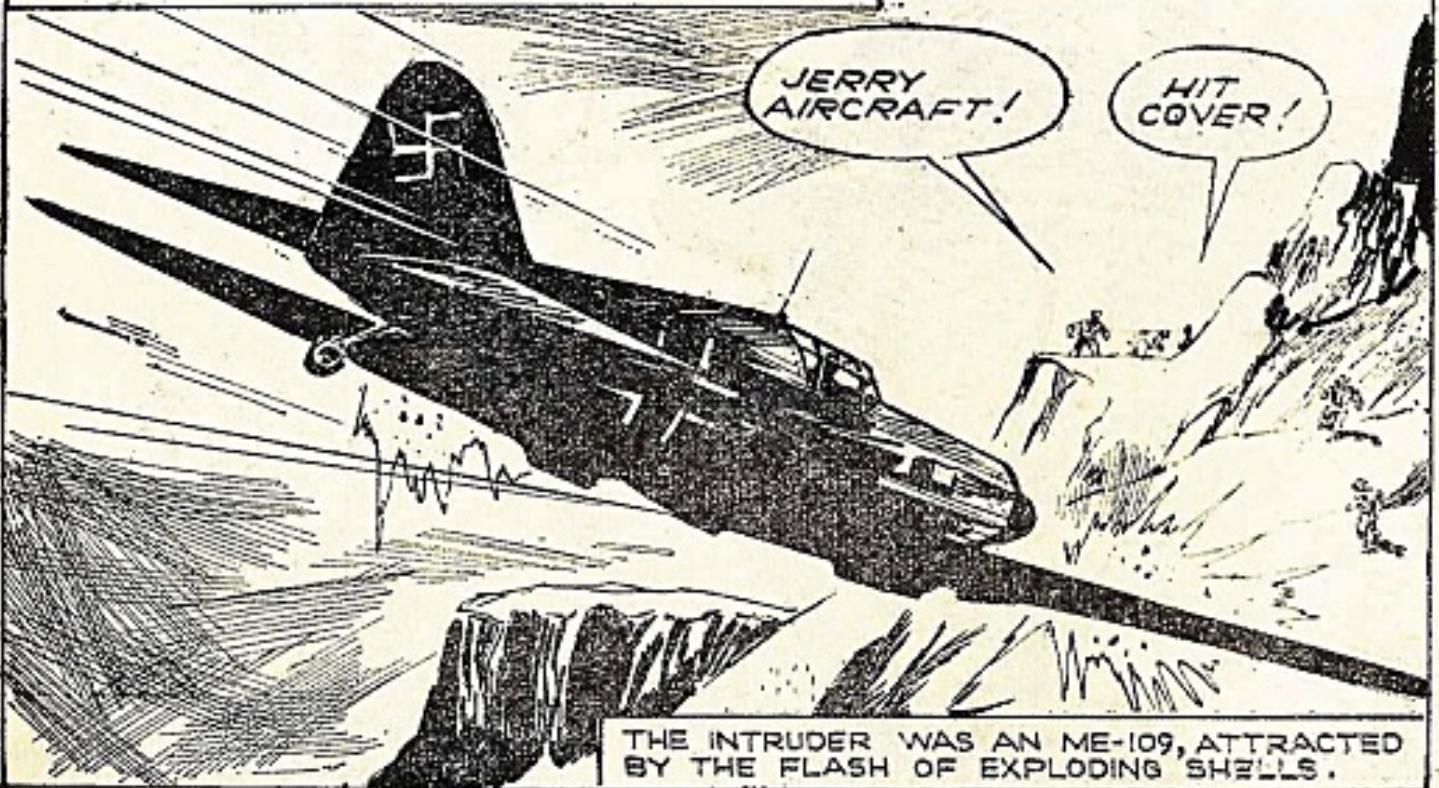


BUT BEFORE THE STARTLED BURKE COULD CANCEL HIS CORRECTIONS, THERE WAS A THUNDEROUS ROAR OF AN AERO ENGINE... AND THE HARSH CLATTER OF CANNON AND MACHINE-GUNS.

JERRY AIRCRAFT!

HIT COVER!

THE INTRUDER WAS AN ME-109, ATTRACTED BY THE FLASH OF EXPLODING SHELLS.



THE MESSERSCHMITT'S CANNON-FIRE ROUND NO HUMAN TARGET BUT SLAMMED INTO THE ROCK FACE AND CAUSED A SMALL AVALANCHE OF LOOSENED ROCK.



SERGEANT CRAGG WAS THE FIRST TO REALISE THE IMPLICATION OF THE SHATTERED RADIO LINK WITH THE FLEET ...

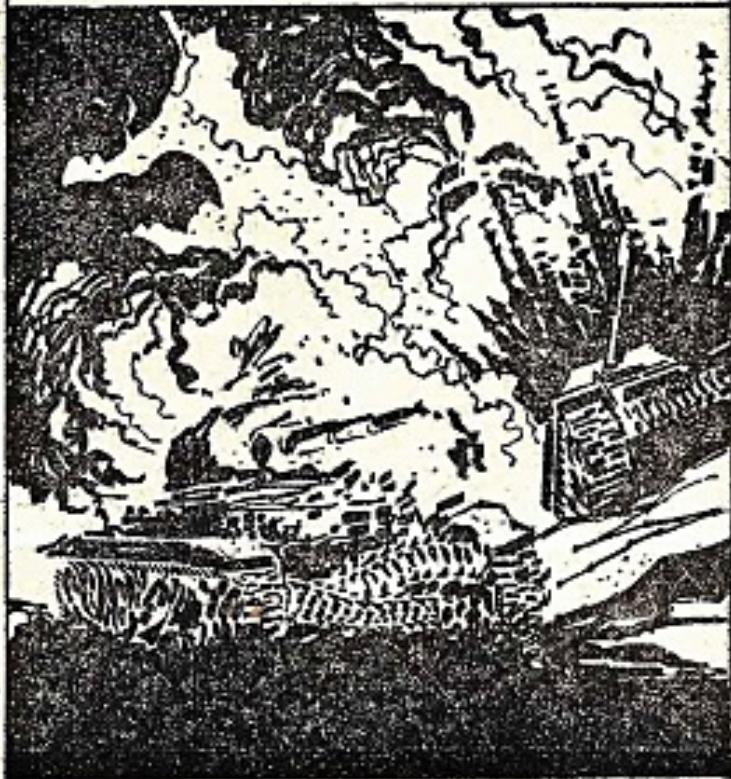


## Line Of Fire

ONCE AGAIN THE THUNDER OF A NAVAL BROADSIDE BURST UPON SEA AND MOUNTAIN...



...AND ONCE AGAIN A TERRIBLE SALVO OF DESTRUCTION FELL UPON THAT ROCKY DEFILE - AND THIS TIME IT WAS DEADLY ACCURATE.



AS THE ECHOES DIED AWAY IN THE HILLS AND THE SMOKE OF CHAOS CLEARED, SERGEANT CRAGG ANXIOUSLY SCANNED THE SLOPES BELOW.

THERE'S CAPTAIN BOYD... HE LOOKS HURT!



THERE WAS ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND THE ANSWER.

IT LOOKS AS IF  
BOYD HAS INTERFERED  
ONCE TOO OFTEN.

GIVE ME THAT  
PIAT, AND YOU LOT  
STAY WHERE YOU  
ARE!

CRAIG CLAMBERED DOWN THE ROCKY SLOPE WITH ALL SPEED, FOR ANOTHER NAVAL SALVO WOULD BE POUNDING IN WITHIN A MATTER OF SECONDS.

POOR DEVILS! IF ONLY BOYD HAD LEFT WELL ALONE ...

PANTING, HE REACHED BOYD'S SIDE. DESPITE HIS OBVIOUS PAIN,  
THE OFFICER COULD RAISE A WRY SMILE.

HAD A NOTION AFTER ALL  
THAT THOSE TANKS WOULD COME  
THIS WAY. KNEW YOU'D NEED  
MY HELP, CRAGG.

LISTEN, SIR, I'VE GOT  
TO MOVE YOU...  
RIGHT NOW!



CRAGG LIFTED THE GROANING CAPTAIN AND MADE FOR SAFER GROUND. BEHIND HIM, THE GRIND AND SCREAM OF TANK TRACKS TOLD OF THE ENEMY'S FRANTIC EFFORTS TO ESCAPE THE FEARFUL DEATH TRAP.

GAINING BETTER SHELTER, CRAGG WAS JUST EASING THE DESPERATELY WOUNDED OFFICER TO THE GROUND WHEN BULLETS BEGAN TO CHIP AT THE CLIFF FACE ABOUT THEM.

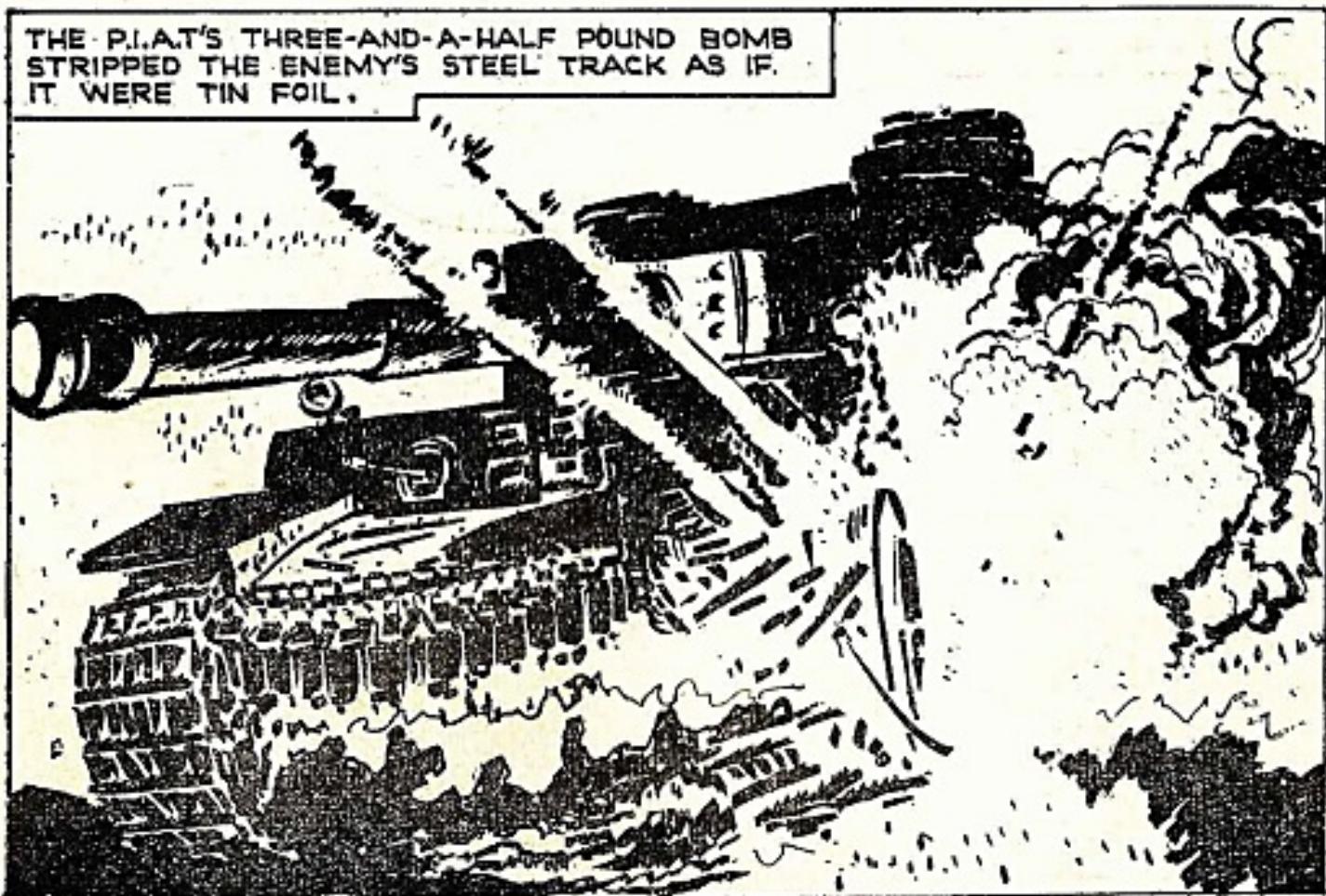


SERGEANT CRAGG UNLIMBERED THE P.I.A.T. GUN FROM HIS SHOULDER AND FLUNG HIMSELF FLAT...

NOW, JERRY... YOU CAN HAVE A FIGHT IF YOU WANT IT!

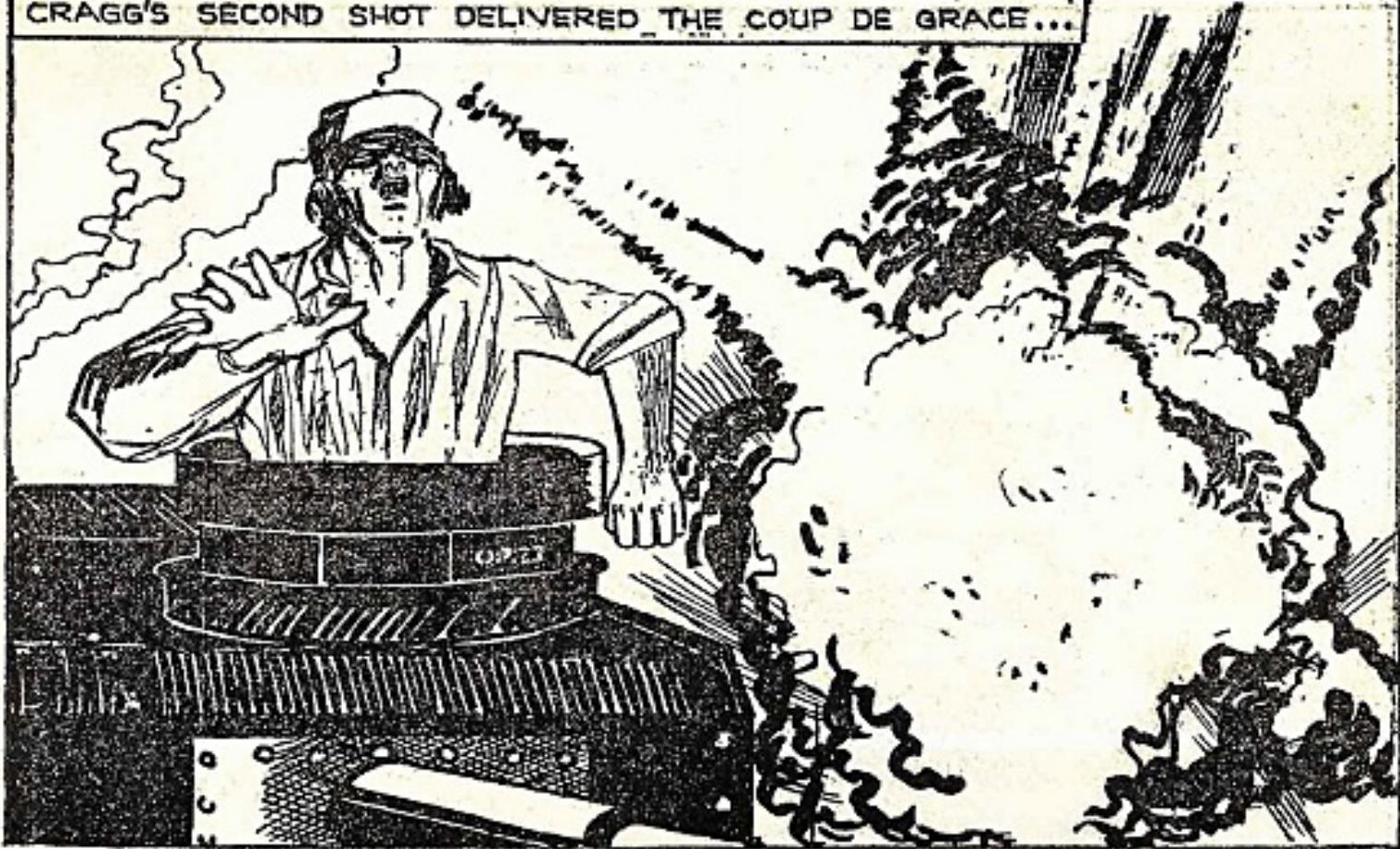


THE P.I.A.T'S THREE-AND-A-HALF POUND BOMB STRIPPED THE ENEMY'S STEEL TRACK AS IF IT WERE TIN FOIL.



## Line Of Fire

CRAgg'S SECOND SHOT DELIVERED THE COUP DE GRACE...



THEN CAME THE NAVAL BOMBARDMENT, CRUSHING THE TANKS OF THE PROUD PANZER DIVISION INTO SO MUCH SCRAP IRON.

DONNER UND BLITZEN!  
BACK - GET BACK OR  
WE SHALL ALL BE  
DESTROYED!



MEANWHILE CAPTAIN BOYD, NOW DEATHLY PALE, WAS STRUGGLING TO SPEAK. BENDING LOW TO HEAR, CRAGG WAS SURPRISED TO SEE THE PEACEFUL EXPRESSION INTO WHICH THE OFFICER'S FACE HAD RELAXED.



THE MONTHS OF GNAWING ANXIETY WERE OVER FOR CAPTAIN BOYD. HE SEEMED TO HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT IT WAS NAVAL GUNS THAT HAD WIPE OUT THE LARGE FORCE OF ENEMY ARMOUR. HIS WORDS CAME JERKILY.

YOU'LL TELL THEM, CRAGG, WON'T YOU? IT WAS MY COMMAND THAT FOUND — AND DESTROYED THOSE PANZERS. NOW JERRY'S ALL SMASHED UP...



**Line Of Fire**

AS SERGEANT CRAGG LOOKED DOWN UPON THE STRANGELY HAUNTED MAN, A WAVE OF COMPASSION SWEPT OVER HIM. GONE WAS THE BITTERNESS AND THE STRIFE ...

SURE I'LL TELL THEM, SIR. YOU SAVED THE WHOLE POSITION.

CAPTAIN BOYD, WHO HAD LIVED IN SUCH CONSTANT SELF-TORTURE, HAD DIED WELL SATISFIED ... AND WHO COULD BLAME AN OLD FOOL OF A SERGEANT FOR LYING ?



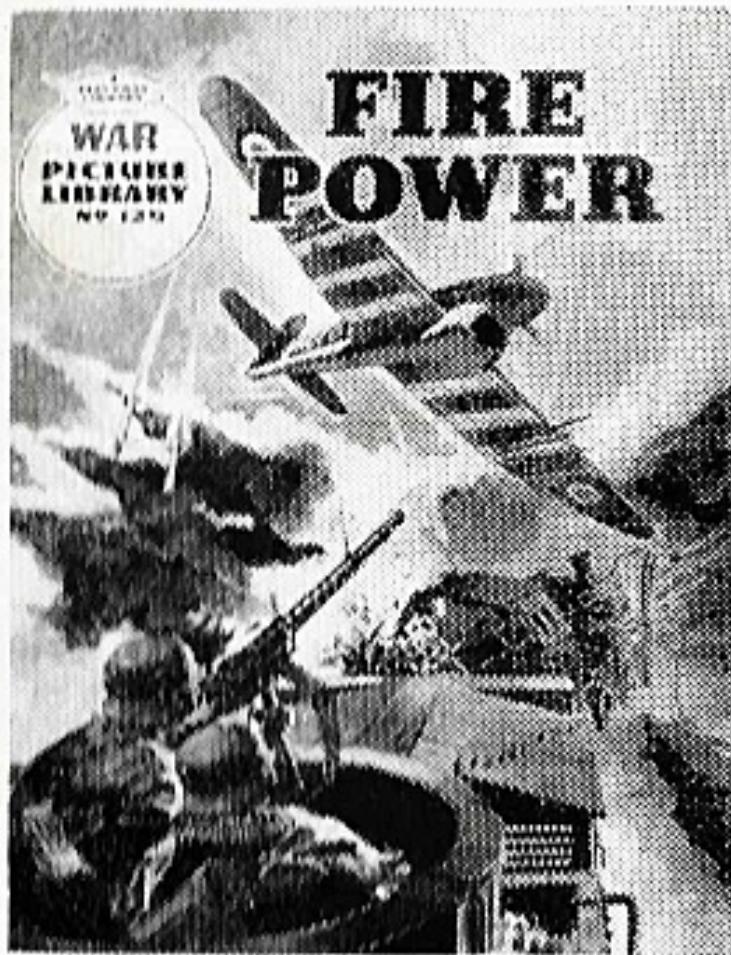
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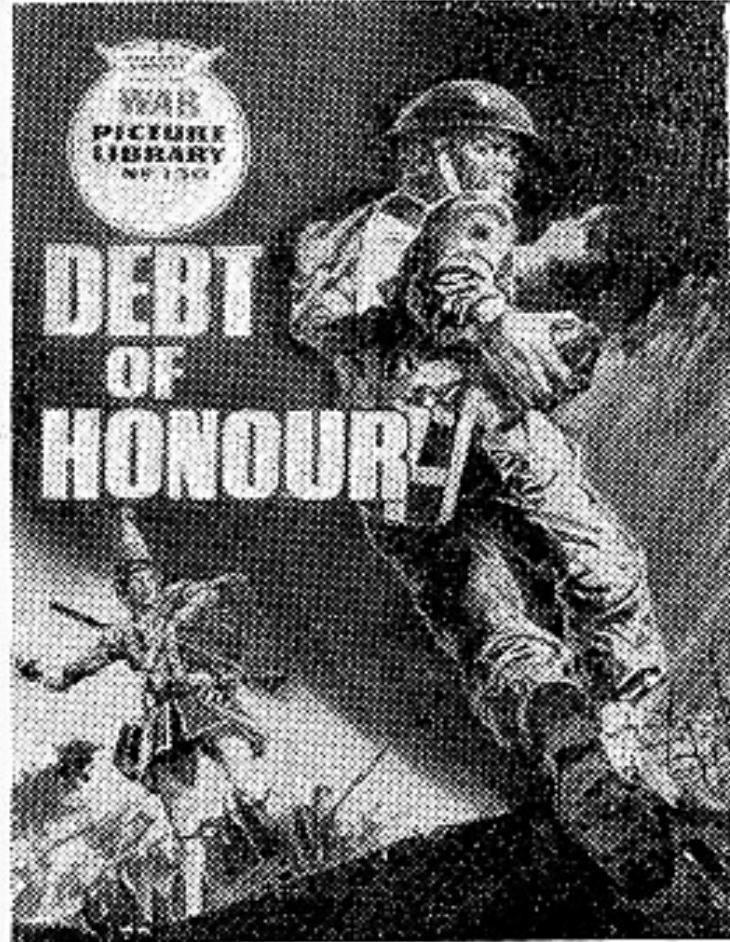
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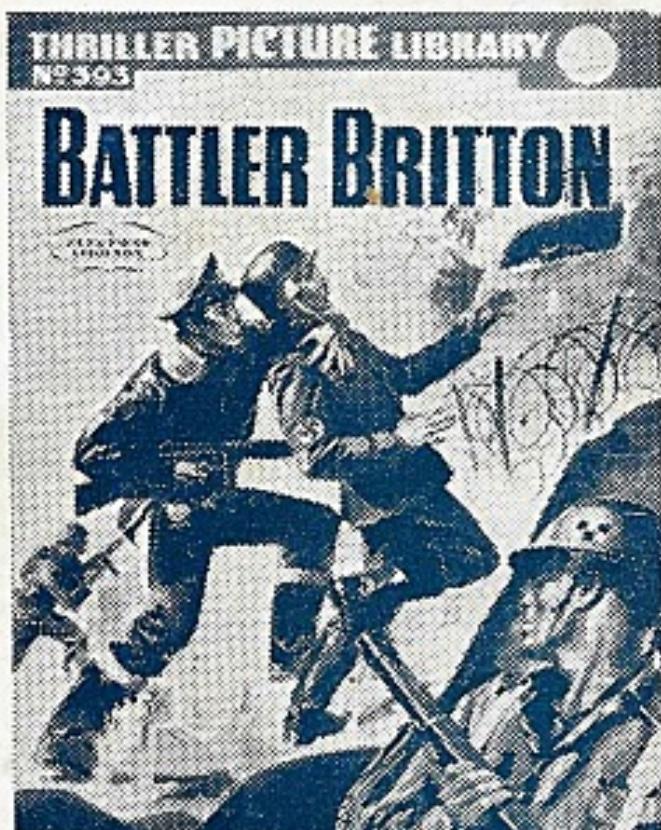
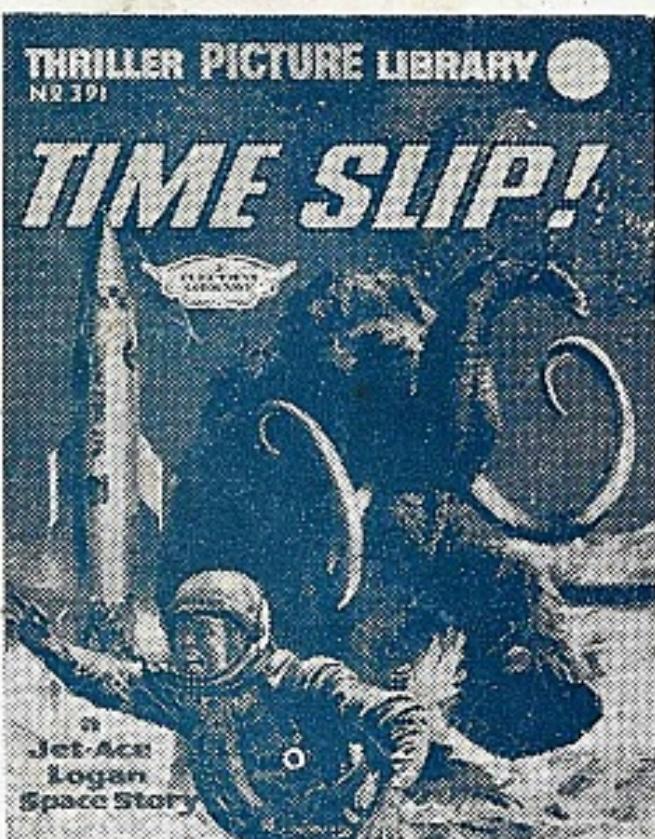
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